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MARCH
MORNING

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E.T.C.

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ALL IN THE WILD

MARCH MORNING.

By the Author of "Fairy Gold," etc., etc.

CHICAGO:
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1888.



ALL IN THE WILD MARCH MORNING.

CHAPTER I.

"You have been such a time away, Tredennick!"

The lady spoke with a little aggrieved smile, and in tones of reproach, as of those of a person so accustomed to regard and consideration that the mere involuntary absence of her votaries is resented as an approach to neglect, placing as she did so her tiny feet, in their dainty black silk-stockings and kid shoes, all rosetted and gold-buckled, nearer, on her velvet-covered fender-stool, to the warmth of the crimson-glowing fire.

"Hand me my large fan, please—that black-bugled affair. Thank you;" and she adjusted the black glittering fan to shade her pale smooth cheek from the ardent glare, and arranged her fine cambric lace-edged handkerchief over her little, plump, white jewelled hand to protect its fairness also.

Some vain exacting young beauty she doubtless appears, this fair dame. Hasty judgments are always unwise—nearly always incorrect.

Madam Vivian had been a beauty without doubt, and possessed a beauty of her own yet—had been just as vain and exacting as most young, courted, flattered beauties are—no more, no less—and was as gracefully imperious, as self-sufficient, self-willed, and self-possessed, as handsome, haughty, well-bred, well-born, and wealthy elderly ladies generally are.

Despite her dark brilliant eyes, her smooth fair cheek, her scarcely lined brow, her well-cut lips and white even teeth—all her own beauty, her own natural gift without a touch of art to aid it—Madam Vivian of Roseworthy was fifty-six years of age, and wore on her hair, which was beautiful, lustrous, wavy, and silver-gray, a fragile kind of diadem of black lace, all besprinkled with glittering tremulous stars and

crescents of jet, to denote her state of widowed mourning, although it dated back some seven years before.

The person addressed as Tredennick, therefore, was not that subservient, humble-minded, and somewhat timid individual who had the unparalleled good fortune to be the husband of a flattered, imperious beauty; nor was he her son, although his years numbered some twenty-four less than hers.

"My dear aunt," he said, quietly, "the East Indiaman *Chittoor* is rather different in character from your little *Blue-bell*, in the days when you went yachting, to go here and there by the favour of wind and tide."

"Dear me, Tredennick, I should think I know that!" said Madam Vivian, rather petulantly. "But you have been away a very long time, I repeat—it seems to me that each of your voyages is longer than the last. Of course I know there are no attractions in England to make you hasten home."

The black glittering fan in Madam Vivian's hand, and the black begemmed lace on her silvery hair, stirred and fluttered with an air of misery and reproach.

The keen, expressive blue-gray eyes of Stephen Tredennick, Captain of the East Indiaman *Chittoor*, sparkled with a passing gleam of amusement; and then he replied, as quietly as before—

"No attractions outside the home my dear aunt is kind enough to welcome a poor sailor to."

The compliment and tribute, warmly as they were expressed, nevertheless failed in quite pacifying Madam Vivian. She fluttered her fan more impatiently for a few moments, glancing athwart it with her dark eyes flashing in a manner which showed what deadly service the dainty weapon might have done in the days of her early ball-room campaigns.

"It is your own fault entirely, Stephen," she said, sharply and suddenly; "you might have other attractions, and other homes to welcome you, if you cared."

"Yes, but I do not care, aunt," he replied more quietly, a certain stern look coming into his kind blue eyes; "we have said all we can say on that subject, and you know my mind."

"Yes; you will never marry unless you meet a girl whom you can love," said Madam Vivian, in rather a shrill tone, as of one labouring under much suppressed annoyance. "You only say that for want of a better answer to make me, Stephen. It cannot be possible that an educated man of thirty-two has no other ideas on the subject of an eligible wife than the mere Jack-Tar notion of 'a girl to love!'"

"I regret to say—such is the density of my ignorance and the narrow-mindedness of my obstinate determination," returned Captain Tredennick, smiling still, but looking a little irritated—"the mere Jack-Tar notion is the very one for me."

"Well," said Madam, changing her tactics, and beginning to reason anew, with all the pertinacity of a self-willed woman, "why can not you find the girl to love? What is to hinder you?"

"Where am I to find her? I don't admire the black-eyed Susans or lovely Nans of seaport towns; and I assure you, dear aunt, my acquaintance with London belles is excessively limited."

"Excessively limited—I should think so!" retorted Madam, petulantly, as she saw in her nephew's face the glimmer of amusement at her anxiety. "No wonder it should be limited, when you spend your time in the smoky, groggy society of a set of sailors, and go poking about their 'snug cribs,' as they call their little out-of-the-way villas and cottages that are kept like ship-cabins, and with not even a female house-keeper sometimes!"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, aunt," said he, laughing; "Martyn has a remarkably pretty housekeeper, whom he adores, and a houseful of pretty maidservants."

"Captain Martyn had sense enough to marry, and marry well too," said Madam, shortly.

"And Stephen Tredennick has not sense enough to marry; and, if he ever does, is likely to marry ill," retorted the Captain of the *Chittoor*, rising and walking away to the window.

"I do not at all doubt it," said Madam, sharply.

"That nor'-wester is blowing pretty stiff," Captain Tredennick remarked presently, glad to change the subject of conversation, as he drew back the thick green damask curtains, and looked out into the misty stormy night. "Dirty weather in the Channel to-night, I fear," he went on, talking to himself, for Madam Vivian sat with her head turned away, her little slippered foot pettishly beating the footstool; "there will be a gale before midnight. I think I will go out and have a look—smoke my pipe on the cliffs—that is, if it won't be put out," and he laughed as he turned to leave the room.

"At this hour, Stephen!—in the darkness and storm!" Madam Vivian exclaimed, her affection and anxiety quite overcoming her ill-humour. "My dear boy, you must not think of it! Are there not your own room and the study—

both with good fires, and warm and cosy? Stephen dear, pray do not!"

"Very well then, aunt, to please you," he said, going towards the door nevertheless; "but I shall just have a look at the night."

"Not on the cliffs—pray, Stephen, not on the cliffs!" Madam Vivian reiterated. "Stephen, do you hear me?"

"I hear you, dear aunt," he replied, with a kind of grave patience; "are you afraid that a capful of wind would take me off my legs and blow me over Tregarthen Head?"

"A capful of wind do you call it?" cried Madam, indignantly, pointing her white hand to the wildly-swaying boughs of the great elms outside, as their dark forms were visible against the lighter background of stormy, cloudy sky, through which the faint moonlight struggled dimly. "I have been out in a gale of wind before now, and I know one as well as you do, Captain Tredennick! Come and sit down to chess this instant, under peril of my displeasure—Llanyon will send us up some tea presently—and forget your quarter-deck and dirty weather and night watches for once."

"My dear aunt, I am no more able to refuse compliance with any request of yours than my late uncle was," said her nephew; and there was a glimmer of ridicule in the sailor's keen pleasant eyes as he turned obediently, moved the little inlaid table in front of Madam's easy chair, and placed thereon the splendidly-carved ivory chessmen which he himself had brought home from Canton as a gift. Common report would have it, indeed, that the late John Vivian, Squire of Roseworthy, parish of St. Awen, Cornwall, had carried the trait of conjugal amiability, to which his nephew alluded, so very far that it had carried him at length into the regions of conjugal slavery—but then common report is always slanderous.

Chess was Madam Vivian's favorite game; she delighted as much as she excelled in its intriguing, its deep-laid policy, its ambuscades, and well-won victories; and it was her boast to say that she never met her match on the field of the chequered board, except in a Tredennick of Tregarthen.

She certainly did meet her match, and her victor very often, in a Tredennick of Tregarthen; but then she could gracefully yield the palm to those of her own kindred, for she had been a Tredennick of Tregarthen before she came to rule over Squire Vivian's handsome house and well-filled purse in Roseworthy.

"I had intended to go up to Tregarthen this evening," Stephen Tredennick remarked absently, toying with a captured pawn, and oblivious of an awful menace to his bishop from Madam's last move. "It is too late now; I must go up to-morrow. The Truscotts are keeping the old house together, I suppose, aunt?"

"Yes, keeping it together," Madam replied with a slight shrug; "it is a perfect ruin, you know. Stephen, do you intend that pawn to remain?"

"I am sorry for it," said Captain Tredennick, moving the pawn carelessly; "I should not like the old home to fall to ruins, even if I never lived in it."

"It would take full three thousand pounds to rebuild and renovate," observed Madam, with another shrug; "if you are never going to live there, it does not matter, I suppose. If I had three thousand to spare, I would do it for the sake of the name of the Tredennicks of Tregarthen, but I have not. So I suppose it must go, as they will go; you are the last of the Tredennicks, and I dare say another half century will blot even the memory of them off the face of the earth."

"I dare say," replied Stephen Tredennick, gravely.

"There goes your bishop!" cried Madam, sharply, swooping down on the neglected piece. "What are you thinking of? You are playing very badly to-night!"

"I shall not spend three thousand certainly," Stephen Tredennick said, taking the loss of the bishop very philosophically, "but I certainly must spend a few pounds in making it weathertight. I shall go up there to-morrow."

"It is sad to see it in the state it is in," returned Madam, speaking in meaning accents still. "I should like before I die to see the Tredennicks of Tregarthen there once more; but I never shall, I suppose."

The unpleasant subject was cropping up again. Captain Tredennick made another reckless move, and turned his head towards the window.

"Ah, the gale is upon us sooner than I thought," he said, the sigh of the trees and the mournful sighing of the night wind rising, as he spoke, into a sudden shrieking blast, that roared above the thundering din of the crashing billows out by the headland crags, and swept over the mansion fiercely, beating at its closed doors and windows, screaming round the grouped chimneys, the angles and gables, and burying itself with long, tremulous wails in the surging hurricane of sound of the wild, leafless woodlands behind.

"Check to your queen!" said Madam.

Captain Tredennick made a few feeble efforts to save the game, but a move or two more placed it entirely in Madam's hands.

"I do not call that a game, now—it was merely surrendered," said she pushing her chair away in pique. "If you did not want to play, why did you not say so? Ring for tea, please, Stephen."

"I really do not feel my head quite clear to-night, aunt," he explained, apologetically; "my mind kept wandering all the time. Hark! It is a bad night for the Channel, and no mistake!"

Llanyon, Madam Vivian's staid, grave butler, entered at this juncture with Madam's favourite china—pale buff and gold—and Madam's silver service, with the fragrant green tea, the sparkling sugar, the tiny silver-stoppered bottle of lemon essence, with which she always flavoured her cup, and the little richly-chased ewer of scalded cream. Llanyon had, beside the silver biscuit-basket, another coloured dish.

"Cook sent up some 'heavy-cake,' Madam," he said, a little apologetically. "She says it is very nice, if you and the Captain would like to try it. Miss Winnie is very fond of it—only she has not come to-night."

"Oh, I see!" said Madam, laughing carelessly—"it was made for Miss Winnie then, and cook kindly condescends to give us a morsel. I am sure we are flattered! No, of course the child has not come to-night—how could you expect it, Llanyon? Come, Stephen. I always like my green tea after chess; indeed, during a prolonged and well-played game I like it to sip at intervals whilst I am playing; but we are hardly in need of it to-night."

Madam Vivian was one of those people who do not easily forgive.

"Who is 'Miss Winnie?'" Captain Tredennick asked. "I never heard of that young lady before."

"Oh, a little girl who comes to read or play to me in the evening," said Madam, intent on the exact flavouring of her tea. "Won't you try the lemon essence, Tredennick? It's a vast improvement. She's a nice little creature, poor child."

Tredennick's eyes appeared to question, whilst he spoke no word—he was, in truth, at that moment calculating the time of the tide, and the probable position of some homeward-bound vessels of which he knew.

"Not a very comfortable home, poor child," said Madam,

in reply to his look; "a step-mother, and a parcel of disagreeable children, you know, and poor Winnie made a kind of drudge for them. I would have taken her altogether as a little companion, but her step-mother had the impertinence to tell me—to tell *me*," repeated Madam, setting back her well-shaped head, with its trembling diadem of lace, and her full white throat—"that Winnie could not be spared from home! Her father came to apologise, and wished me to take Winnie, but I, of course, refused."

Stephen Tredennick did not quite see the force or justice of the "of course," but he merely asked—

"What is he?"

"A Coastguard officer. He has been in the Royal Navy, and held the rank of lieutenant," replied Madam Vivian. "You really should taste this 'heavy-cake,' Tredennick; cook always makes it deliciously. Of course, only that she is a gentleman's daughter, I would not make a companion of poor little Winnie, though she is such a clever little being—plays quite prettily, and sings a little, and reads beautifully—quite a natural gift, poor child!"

Again Tredennick did not see, under all the circumstances, the force and justice of the "of course," but said nothing; the allusion to the Coastguard service having sent his mind off, through the wild darkness of the bleak March night on the English coast, the driving rain and howling blast, to smugglers' adventures, skirmishes, captures, and escapes, in the sultry gloom of tropical nights beneath the silver glory of the Southern Cross, and to the pirate's darker craft, like a fell bird of prey darting amidst the

Summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea.

An impatient clink of the china and silver resulting in a tiny chime brought him back with a start to the reality of Madam Vivian's richly furnished drawing-room, all green, in different shades and depths of hue, as regarded its upholstery and drapery of velvet and satin damask, all aglow with the light of wax-candles and blazing firelight, all glittering with black walnut-woods and heavy dull-gold frames (Madam Vivian liked green in her rooms—it suited her complexion, and it did not tire her eyes, she said; she liked wax-candles and large fires; and she chose black walnut in preference to gayer and less chaste carvings)—to the contemplation of Madam's pale handsome face with a faint hue, the last flush of the once exquisite roses of her cheeks, relieving it from actual

pallor or sallowness—to the contemplation of her silvery waves of shining hair, her rich lustreless trailing black silk, the dainty tea-table, and Madam's jewelled fingers, with sparks of rainbow fire on them as they moved hither and thither amongst the tea-equipage; and then the wild storm and rain, drenching the windows outside, claimed him again.

"Hark!" said Madam suddenly, dropping the sugar-tongs with a deafening clash—"it never can be! Did you not hear a knock and ring, Tredennick?"

"Certainly I did," he replied, in some surprise.

"It can never be that child!" said Madam irritably. "It could not be possible! How slow Llanyon is!"

To alleviate her impatience, Tredennick had risen and laid his hand on the lock, when he heard the hall-door unbarred, and then shut hastily against the storm, as some one rushed in with an ejaculation.

"It's Miss Winnie, Madam," said the old butler, as Tredennick opened the drawing-room door; and at the same moment a small muffled-up figure, apparently dripping with wet, appeared in the brightly lit portal.

"Winifred!" cried Madam Vivian, sharply—Madam's voice was very clear, and rather high-pitched, and could be very shrill and sharp when she chose.

"Yes, Madam," came in rather muffled-up tones from the dripping figure.

"What on earth induced you to come out on such a night?" Madam demanded, her fair smooth forehead lined with displeasure. "In torrents of rain, darkness and storm, and at this hour, too! Did you imagine I wanted to be read to at nine o'clock in the evening?"

"It was much earlier when I left home, Madam," the little wet bundled-up figure said humbly. "It was only half-past seven when I left home, and the storm overtook me—and I had to go errands besides."

Madam compressed her well-cut pink lips, and poured out another cup of tea for herself.

"Well, Winifred"—sugaring, creaming, and flavouring the beverage very delicately, but without raising her eyes from her employment—"as you have been ridiculous enough to quit your own home, and come through darkness and storm until you are covered with mud and wet from head to foot, for the very laudable purpose of reading to me at an hour when I shall be going to bed—as you would scarcely be presentable for the next two hours—you had better go down to cook and

get your clothes dried, and have some hot tea or something. Such an idea! I am sure, Tredennick, you must think me a considerate woman to expect a young girl to come more than two miles along the cliffs, on such a night as this, to read to me! Positively!" Madam was very angry, and spilled some of her delicate tea over her cambric handkerchief. "Shut the door, please, Winifred, and go down to cook, as I told you."

The little dark wet figure listened quietly to the last word of the reproof, and then softly shut the door and stole away.

"Did you ever know anything so preposterous?" said Madam, angrily, to Tredennick. "The idea of the girl's attempting such a thing, and that abominable step-mother of hers and her stupid father to allow her! That is the worst of Winnie: she is so excessively stupid—silly, you know—a childish stupidity without an idea of discretion or judgment. I am really exceedingly provoked with Winnie. She will run over here in all weathers—glad to get away from her wretched home, I suppose; but then I shall have the blame if anything happens to her. Just imagine, if that child were blown over the cliffs, or Tregarthen Head—she lives half a mile beyond Tregarthen—what a state I should be in! Accused of her untimely end, I dare say, by all her friends and relations!"

"She does not seem to have many, poor little lassie!" commented Captain Tredennick, commiseratingly.

"No, indeed," said Madam Vivian, self-complacently, ignoring any second meaning in his words; "she is always running after me—seems almost to cling to me, poor child!"

Madam was fond of her faithful little *protegee*, pitied her poverty and friendlessness, recognised the "poor child's" natural gifts and social attractions, yet she sat there composedly drinking her high-flavoured costly beverage, and languidly tasting the morsels of rich cake on her plate, luxuriating in the cosy warmth and elegance she loved, while the "poor child" had been peremptorily banished, cold, wet, and weary as she was, and bidden to seek what rest and restoration she could find from the hands of servants. Madam was utterly unconscious of any unkindness. Passing through the homage of her flattered girlhood to the more slavish homage of her indulged imperious wifehood, she had never felt what it was to love another better than herself—never felt one touch of that

Love born of sorrow,
Which like sorrow is true—

which makes the true heart beat so tenderly for another's heart grief. She had never known one throb of self-sacrificing passionate affection beneath her childless breast.

Stephen Tredennick did not remember or know of this, and make her the allowance which must be made for those placidly self-satisfied, prosperous-lived, cold, untried natures. He was surprised and displeased; and the remembrance of the desolate, humble little figure drove all other considerations out of his head.

He was very silent for a long time, until Madam, impatiently abandoning all further attempts at conversation, pushed her cup aside, and betook herself to the perusal of one of "Mudie's last."

"You are tired, I dare say, Tredennick," she said curtly; "pray do not stand on any ceremony. I shall read for an hour or so."

"Very well, aunt," he replied, and, bidding her good-night, quitted the room.

CHAPTER II.

A quarter of an hour afterwards Captain Stephen Tredennick, instead of being ensconced in the well-lighted, well-warmed bachelor rooms which were given up for the nonce to him and tobacco-smoke, was prowling about, in a state of dire uncertainty, though gloomy, draughty passages and rooms in the lower regions of Roseworthy House, and in close proximity to the cellars and pantries.

"I really must satisfy myself," he muttered self-apologetically—"I really must know if my aunt intends sending that poor little girl home along the cliffs through such a gale and rain as this. The poor child is safe for coughs and colds long enough, I dare say. I really should not wonder if she were made to return as she came. I wonder at aunt Vivian! I really never would——"

Here Captain Tredennick's kind-heartedness and progressive search brought him up to a closed door, beneath which shone a light, and through which came the sound of women's voices.

"I beg your pardon—would you be kind enough to tell me," he began, with a true gentlemanly courtesy to servants,

and especially women-servants, as he gently knocked, and, being bidden to enter, pushed the door ajar.

The room, a small, cosy, humbly-furnished parlour, with a bright fire, a singing tea-kettle, and a most fragrant perfume of tea, toast, and cake, was evidently that comfortable sanctum of the female chiefs of the kingdom below stairs, "the housekeeper's room;" nor had Captain Tredennick any difficulty in recognising those personages in the prim, genteel, silk attired lady's maid and the rosy, rotund, white-aproned cook.

"Would you tell me if the little girl—that poor little body who came here a while ago through the storm——"

He stopped; for the cook had risen at the sound of his voice, and curtsied, toasting fork in hand, smiling in the direction of the little arm-chair opposite the lady's maid.

"Oh, there she is!" said Captain Tredennick, much relieved, when, at the first glance in the direction the cook had indicated, he perceived a small figure, huddled in a bright flaring-coloured shawl and a rather bundled-up-looking costume, resting in the soft little, shabby-pillowed chair by the bright fireside. "I am glad to see you are being comfortably taken care of," he added, pleasantly. "I was afraid that you might have been foolish enough to venture home by the cliffs this wild night—you will not attempt it, I hope?"

The little figure half rose from her seat, trying to arrange her cumbersome drapery, which evidently belonged to a far larger and taller person, and holding the gay crimson-and-yellow shawl tightly around her.

"Oh no, sir, thank you," she said, and a timid flush rose over her small pale face up to the very roots of her hair. "Since I have come, Madam Vivian says I am to stop to-night at Roseworthy; and Mrs. Grose, the cook, and Miss Trewhella have been very kind to me."

She smiled a little smile of shy girlish fun at her big shawl and trailing skirts.

"Not at all, Miss Winnie dear," interposed Miss Trewhella, with a genteel short cough and deprecatory gesture. "Your dress was perfectly wet through, you know—perfectly wet, sir," she added, turning to Captain Tredennick with a politely explanatory air; "and of course we had to resort to remedies to prevent poor Miss Winnie from catching cold—poor child."

"Indeed, yes," Mrs. Grose put in, with a broad humorous smile on her round, red, shining face; "she was as wet as a

drowned rat, Captain Stephen, sir." Miss Trewhella coughed again to drown the vulgar simile, but Mrs. Grose went on persistently, the fat pleasant smile beginning to widen into a laugh. "No wonder, such a terrible soaking night as this. She hadn't a dry thread on her—had you, Miss Winnie, dearie? We had to take every stitch off of her, poor child; and she has nothing on now only——" Miss Trewhella coughed as if she would break a blood-vessel, and darted a look of dignified horror at the cook—"only some things of mine and Miss Trewhella's, sir," continued the cook equably, proceeding to butter the toast; "and we are a-making of her a bit comfortable."

"Indeed, so I see," said Captain Stephen, looking pleased; "there is no fear for any one in these comfortable quarters, Mrs. Grose. Don't let me disturb you, I beg," he went on, moving nearer to the fire as Miss Trewhella glided away with a profound and graceful curtsy. He meant to shake hands with the little girl, and warn her to avoid travelling by Tregarthen Head any more on dark stormy evenings like this. "I can not tell how you could manage to keep your feet along that cliff road over the Head in such a gale," he was saying, when his notice became attracted to the young girl's hair.

That it was thick, and dark, and hanging in dishevelled masses over her shoulders he had seen at first, but not until the blazing firelight and his immediate proximity revealed it to him did he perceive its lustrous, wavy abundance, the burnished golden light on the wealth of ripples and tresses, naturally curling from the effects of the late wetting and sudden hot drying, and its great length. As she sat, it fell below her waist, and lay in silken masses in her lap.

With honest, simple, admiring surprise, with not a spice of sailor gallantry in his kind gray eyes, he laid his hand lightly on the little bowed head by his side.

"My dear child, what beautiful hair you have!" he said.

She looked up in quick astonishment, her quiet, rather plain face lighting up strangely with pleasure, and a pair of very dark deep-set eyes seeking his most earnestly.

Stephen Tredennick had read—as who has not?—the beautiful and touching story of "The Child of the Marshalsea;" and in this moment there flashed across his memory the scene where the wretched woman, who yields to "Little Dorrit's" tender pleadings for a few words as they encounter each other in the dreary London streets, starts back from the first look into the pitying eyes with the wild cry, "You are a woman!"

for, at the first glance of the dark, expressive, wistful, inquiring eyes upturned to his face, he had almost started back and uttered a like exclamation.

He had taken her to be a girl about fourteen. Very young as she undoubtedly was, and small and slight her form, there was a strong, brave, passionate, womanly soul looking through those eyes—there were womanly sorrow and womanly endurance in the lines around her gentle, firm mouth. They softened, and the face grew very young and girlish in the quick flush of happiness and innocent vanity which his words had called forth, but she drew her hair away from his touch, and a certain air of womanly dignity replaced the girlish blush.

“My hair was quite wet, sir, and had to be all dried,” she said, pushing it back almost out of sight.

“And it’s none so dry yet that you should put it away like that, Miss Winnie,” interposed Mrs. Grose, rather mischievously. “Captain Tredennick never saw finer hair than that in his life. Now did you, sir?”

“No, I do not think I ever did,” he replied, smiling courteously—“that is, what I was allowed to see of it.”

He paused a moment, waiting to catch the girl’s eye, but she kept her face turned away, and he thought he saw her low white brow knit in an uneasy frown.

“Good-night, Miss—Miss——” he said confusedly, believing that he had forgotten a name which, in fact, he had never heard.

“My name is Winifred Caerlyon, sir,” she vouchsafed quietly, barely glancing at him, and then looking away again.

“The Captain is waiting to bid you good-night, Miss Winnie, my dear,” remonstrated Mrs. Grose in a very urgent undertone.

She rose instantly, obedient. It troubled Stephen Tredennick, though he could not have told why, to see that quick humble obedience, to hear her hasty “I beg your pardon, sir,” and see the timid flush in her cheeks as she placed her small, hard, labour-marked hand in his.

Not as Stephen Tredennick, the sailor who wanted to be kind to another sailor’s daughter, did she regard him, but as the great gentleman, Tredennick of Tregarthen—the favourite nephew and heir of her grand patroness.

A thought like this crossed his mind, as his fingers warmly pressed those poor slim girlish ones, roughened from stitching, and marked with the inevitable scars and scratches of constant household work.

"Poor child! Poor little girl!" he ejaculated mentally. "Good-night," said he, kindly. "I hope you will be none the worse for your wetting; it was much too severe a night for a young lady to venture out."

Something in the flickering light of a sarcastic smile on her lips, and an involuntary turn of her head towards Mrs. Grose, where that worthy woman was pouring out tea, as she said, "I am used to being out on business in all weathers, sir—I do not mind it," were a revelation to him of much of poor Winnie Caerlyon's daily life.

"No, indeed, my dear," muttered Mrs. Grose with a sigh. "Now your tea is ready, Miss Winnie, and I hope you'll take it hearty. Miss Winnie is having her tea in our little parlour, you know, sir, because it is more comfortable for her," she said, apologetically, to Captain Tredennick. "Having her dress dried, and no clothes on, you may say—oh, dear me! dear me! Miss Trewhella, you've stood on my corn dreadful! And, besides, it was after Madam's tea time when she came—and Miss Winnie doesn't mind having it down here with her poor old nurse—do you, dear? I nursed her when she wasn't a month old, Captain Tredennick, sir—when her own dear mamma was living."

"And of course you are very fond of her?" He uttered the words as he stood, holding her hand still in his, looking down from his five feet eleven of masculine height and strength on the slender little womanly figure, looking so oddly old-fashioned and young and helpless in the ridiculously long trailing dress and shawl—on the anxious white brow, the sad little mouth, the downcast eyelids, and the rich beauty of her luxuriant hair, at variance in its wealth of loveliness with that quiet grave face, boasting of no fairness save its intelligence, gentleness, and womanly purity. "Poor little girl!" he said, pityingly to himself—"poor dear little girl!"

As if answering his thoughts, Mrs. Grose, the worthy, rotund cook, responded affectionately to his question—

"Indeed, Captain Stephen, sir, there's not many who could help being fond of my poor little Miss Winnie."

And on the spot a queer idea flitted through Captain Tredennick's mind—that if this poor little girl belonged to him in any way, how fond of her he should be—it would be such a pleasure to take care of a meek, gentle little creature like her!

A full hour and a half afterwards—that is, at twenty minutes to twelve—Captain Stephen Tredennick, who had quitted

Madam Vivian's society at half-past nine o'clock, fatigued and unsocial in humour, was sitting before the study-fire, smoking, with as little notion of, or desire for, retiring to rest as he had had at dinner-time. Madam Vivian did not know it, fortunately.

Busily and dreamily as the minutes slipped by and lengthened into half-hours, Captain Tredennick's mind went over a variety of subjects, whilst the odorous clouds of tobacco-smoke wove wreaths of misty fancies around him, and the soft rustle of a falling cinder from the red fire alone broke the hushed silence.

From the *Chittoor*, her cargo and insurance money, his thoughts wandered to his friend Captain Martyn of the *Indus*, the required repairs of the old house of Tregarthen, the gale, the Channel soundings, the sunken rocks off Tregarthen Head, and poor little Winnie Caerlyon.

"Poor little lass! I have no doubt that she has rough water to make her way through," he muttered commiseratingly—"a careless father, an unkind step-mother, and a shoal of young step-brothers and step-sisters; and she made a patient little drudge for all! A nice, gentle girl—pretty, rather, I think—beautiful hair, like a mermaid's—poor child!—one of those meek patient little women that seem made for strong hearty fellows to pet and take care of." And here Captain Tredennick's mind travelled over his list of acquaintances to try to recall the memory of some strong hearty fellow whom he could conscientiously recommend to himself as the life-long lover and protector of a "meek, patient little woman."

"An honest warm-hearted sailor now," he said musingly; "they make good husbands, generally speaking, only their wives have little of their company. Let me see. Martyn now, only he's married two years ago—nice little woman too—somewhat like Winnie Caerlyon, I think—a girl couldn't find a better man or braver officer than Martyn. Let me see."

Some sudden thought seemed to strike the Captain of the East Indiaman *Chittoor*. With a very sober face he laid his pipe aside, rose, and surveyed himself in the nearest mirror for a lengthened space of time, until a grim smile replaced the earnest gaze. He shook his head at his own reflection, turned away, and left the room.

"Stephen Tredennick, my lad," said he, smiling in the same cynical amused fashion as he went, "you've been dreaming—dreaming in your chair, my lad. You had better wake up now, and turn into your berth properly."

CHAPTER III.

The cold, leaden-hued dawn of the wild March morning was just breaking over the stormy sea, where the dark, lowering horizon blended in mist with the level waste, the dismal gray of the tossing angry waters; the gloom of dreary sameness relieved only by the deadly whiteness of the fierce breakers frothing and surging around the buried forms of the dark rock-Titans, whose cruel ministers they were, wreathing their stony brows, their murderous, iron-nailed arms, with the trophies of their pitiless warfare—trailing lengths of gleaming sea-weeds, shell encrusted, torn from ocean homes afar, leaves and grasses of other lands helplessly drifted out to sea, wreaths of crushed blossoms which had bloomed scores of miles away from that barren headland and its wild shore. Alas! there had been more precious gifts given by the fierce white-crested waves to the cruel jaws and pitiless rending of those black, jagged, shining rocks lying in the lap of their ocean mistress. Many a fair human growth, a brave young forest tree, a tender vine, a frail sweet rose, had been the doomed blossoms of the fatal wreaths for the adorning of the Black Reef of Tregarthen Head.

“There is not a worse spot, with the wind inshore, between this and the Goodwins,” and Captain Tredennick, shutting up his glass as he spoke, after a brief survey of the coast line, buttoned his thick pea-jacket closer and turned towards Tregarthen Head.

He had been up and out with the first rays of light, quitting the house by a singly-barred entrance, which fastened with a spring lock and could be opened only from the inside.

“Still, it should have been made safe with the drop bolt,” said the Captain as he passed through; “lubberly work that, to leave a door unfastened all night in such a gale!”

For no one of course was awake or stirring at this hour save himself. The shuttered windows, the drawn blinds, and smokeless chimneys proclaimed the fact from the outside, if there had been any doubts in his mind.

The gale had not exhausted itself yet, and raged on almost as wildly as on the previous night, whilst the angry-looking

coppery-hued masses of cloud out on the murky western horizon, streaming up athwart the wild gray sky in wisp-like storm-driven wreaths, gave dreary assurance of its continuance; and bitterly cold and raw struck the damp March morning air even to the sailor's hardy lungs and weather-beaten face, as he quitted the shelter of the wooded grounds of Roseworthy for the bleak exposed cliff-road.

He had taken but a few paces in this direction when he came to a dead stop, gazing ahead; and even for a moment his hand mechanically fumbled with his glass—as if his keen eyesight could have deceived him! For it needed no telescope to discern plainly and recognise the slight dark figure standing in a sheltered turn of the road.

“Neptune!” exclaimed Captain Tredennick in his amazement, with a soft whistle—“here is the little mermaid!”

The little dark figure turned hastily at the sound of advancing footsteps, and the shy quick flush mounted to her face as Captain Tredennick came up smiling.

“Pon my word, you are early abroad, Miss Winnie Caerlyon!” he laughed. “Are you come out to taste the salt spray? It blows right in one's face up from the rocks.”

“No, sir,” she said, turning her small pale face, looking quite wan and child-like in the cold gray morning light, towards the storm-beaten headland; “I am going home—I must be home by seven o'clock.”

“Going home!” he repeated, remonstratingly. “Surely you will wait to breakfast with us—or have you breakfasted already?”

“Oh, no!” said she hurriedly, and blushing again at the avowal. “I don't mind in the least—I always go home early when I stay at Roseworthy for the night, unless Madam has asked me to stay; father and mamma and all of them expect me.” She drew the faded woollen shawl over her thin cloth jacket, and shivered violently as the keen sea breeze blew her wrapper about. “The morning is very cold, is it not, sir?” she said, trying to keep her teeth from chattering, while her very lips grew pinched and blue. “I ran off without letting Mrs. Grose know—she would have insisted on keeping me until she had some breakfast ready.”

“My dear child,” said Captain Tredennick, feeling quite fatherly in his earnestness, “you should not have come out this bleak morning fasting—after the wetting and fatigue of last night, too. Pray come back to the house, and we will hurry the servants up to get you a cup of coffee at least.”

"Oh, dear, no, sir—thank you," returned Winnie, with gravely-astonished rebuke at his dreaming of such a proposal to her; "I shall be home soon. I shall run very fast down the slope beyond the Head. Good-morning, Captain Tredennick."

She stretched out her little hand in its poor little knitted woollen-glove; and Captain Tredennick, feeling himself a grandfather at least, took it and drew it safely within his arm.

"If you are going to run, I shall run too," said he, smiling protectingly, "until I see you run safe in at your father's door."

But Winnie coloured deeply, looked frightened, apologised, and refused.

"Well, you will allow me to walk beside you as far as Tregarthen Head, if you will not accept my arm, Miss Caerlyon?" requested Captain Tredennick, feeling rather mortified, and feeling less like Winnie's grandfather than the sailor in the presence of another sailor's daughter, which he had considered himself the evening before—and a sailor's daughter who had repulsed his proffered kindness very decidedly.

"A strange, distant, shy little thing," he said, mentally. And then he looked again at the small, earnest features, the anxious, lined brow, the gentle, pleading look in the dark, deep-set eyes, the little, frail womanly figure looking so lonely and forlorn on that desolate road, the thin fluttering garments sprinkled by the salt spray and mist from the thundering billows crashing against the face of the cliffs, and the tender, passionate pity that is ever in the warm, strong heart of a true man for feminine defencelessness and bodily weakness rose within him throbbing to his very lips.

"Oh, no, sir," she said, hurriedly, in answer to his half-provoked query; "you are exceedingly kind—but I could not think of troubling you; and—besides——"

"Besides what?" asked he, laughing. "I am not such a gay young spark that you should object to my escort, Miss Winnie; and I am delighted to have some company along this bare bit of road. I took it into my head, as soon as I woke this morning, to go and look over that old place of mine at Tregarthen; so off I started. I hope I shall find the old couple awake and stirring."

"The Truscotts?" questioned Winnie. "Oh, yes, you will, Captain Tredennick, for there is Tolgooth-mine bell ringing for six o'clock, and they are always up at six, I know."

"You know them, then—a worthy old pair they are!" said Captain Tredennick, turning abruptly off the main road. "Come down Mennacarthen Lane, then, Miss Caerlyon; it will not take you a quarter of a mile out of your road, and we will stop at Tregarthen a few minutes. I am getting hungry, if you are not, and mean to ask old Mother Truscott for a cup of tea."

But Winnie hesitated, coloured, and looked distressed again.

"Come along," said he, gaily, offering his pilot-cloth-covered arm for her acceptance a second time. Plainly Captain Tredennick's "jolly-sailor" existence on board the *Chittoor*—educated gentleman though he was—had rendered him pleasantly forgetful or regardless of nice conventionalities. "Unless you are in a terrible hurry to get home, or are afraid that I am going to eat you," he added, banteringly.

His words seemed to strike some unpleasant chord in the girl's mind; she did not accept his arm, but she quitted the high-road and turned down the lane to Tregarthen beside him.

"I am never afraid except when I think I am doing wrong," she returned, firmly and quietly; "and I only want to be home in time to get breakfast ready, sir."

"That is very good of you to be so helpful to your mother," remarked Captain Tredennick approvingly, falling into the fatherly style again as he and Winnie walked slowly along the rough muddy lane. But no ray of glad filial pleasure and gratitude sparkled in the girl's grave face.

"It is my duty, of course, to do all that I can to help them when help is required," she said seriously. "And there is a great deal to be done in a house like ours."

"Ah, plenty of little brothers and sisters?" queried Captain Tredennick, smiling.

"Yes, sir," replied Winnie, gravely; "there are six of them and the new baby——"

"The new baby?" echoed Captain Tredennick. "And the new baby is the most troublesome of the lot, I'll engage."

"Oh, no, sir," said Winnie, looking up into his face, rather puzzled to discover if he were in jest or earnest; "she is a dear, gentle, patient little creature. I am afraid she is not healthy—she is so quiet."

"Dear me," broke out Captain Tredennick, laughing, "I never knew before now that that was a fatal symptom in a child!" "I hope it isn't so with you, you dear, patient, gentle little creature!" he added mentally, the wish recurring

strongly to him that he could call to mind that paragon of an honest, brave, strong, tender-hearted fellow to take charge of the future comfort and happiness of the patient kind-hearted little woman who spoke so lovingly of that ailing baby—her step-mother's seventh infant.

"And now, sir, I will say good-morning again," said Winnie, as they paused at the entrance-gate to the area of lawn and shrubbery around Tregarthen House, neglected and overgrown now, bearing traces of absence and decay, as did all things else—the barred-up broken windows, the grass-grown door-step, the weedy paths, the rank, tangled evergreens, the lichen-covered gate-pillars, and green, shiny, massive iron bars.

"You won't come in, then, for a minute or two, and have a cup of hot tea, or warm yourself at the fire?" he said, disappointedly; and then some dim remembrance of the conventionalities glided hazily across his mind, and he acquiesced unwillingly in her decision. "Well, good-bye, then," he added, pressing the little woollen gloved-hand, "since you want to get rid of me."

He looked so pleasant, so kind, so handsome, smiling sunnily down on her from the light of his true, clear blue eyes—he, Tredennick of Tregarthen, Captain of the East India merchantman *Chittoor*, nephew of the wealthy aristocratic lady who bore her foreign-sounding title of "Madam," as all the wives of the heirs of Roseworthy had done for generations, so grandly that "Madam Vivian," or "Madam of Roseworthy," became a standard in the minds of the humble ones of the earth, miners and their wives, her village *protégés* and favourite poor women, by which to measure the comparative merits and greatness of other aristocrats—he, a learned gentleman, a brave sailor, grand and great in his years, his strength, his handsome face, his moneyed independence—he so kind and courteous to her—to her, poor, plain-looking, ill-clad Winnie Caerlyon, whom her shrewish step-mother called "a great, awkward, gad-about of a maid," when she had the misfortune to require new boots—worn out, perhaps, all the sooner by her long walks to Roseworthy, which, in its luxury, elegance, and quiet, was poor Winnie's Paradise Regained on earth.

"I do not indeed, Captain Tredennick," was poor Winnie's childish reply; and the great tears started to her sad, earnest gray eyes. "Please don't think me rude."

She was so awkward, so unpolished, so ignorant, she thought. Her step-mother often said so, broadly and directly;

Madam Vivian often hinted it in ladylike language of rebuke or advice.

Winnie had very good and sufficient reasons for speaking and acting as she did, apart from all ideas of mere etiquette; and it was that knowledge, and the shy, proud fear of its being discovered, that made her brows knit so nervously, and her pale face flush beneath the sailor's glance.

"My dear child," said he, very gently, "I think nothing but that you are a good, sensible, thoughtful girl."

The words were but kindly paternal in tone and purport, and, as he uttered them, he laid one hand reassuringly on her shoulder, whilst the other clasped her little, miserably cold, woollen-gloved fingers in farewell; but Winnie shrank beneath that gentle touch and the smile of those clear blue eyes, and the nervous twitching of her brow and lips grew more distressful.

There was no magical wishing-stone by these moss-grown gate pillars, no wishing-well bubbled forth its fateful waters beneath the clustering masses of evergreens, trailing ivy, gleaming laurel, and dark prickly carnelian-jewelled holly which grew dank and close in the neglected shrubbery, and, climbing the boundary wall, spread their dark heavy foliage down to shelter the pair who stood beneath; but Stephen Tredennick wished, as he stood there, as he had never wished before. Something—he knew not what—had touched his heart because of this poor little maiden's girlish loneliness and poverty. Truth to tell, he had hitherto known very little, and cared to know less, of small girls or big girls, old maids or young ones. This new sensation was therefore as strange and unaccountable as his wishing that Winnie Caerlyon lived in a comfortable handsome house, that she had no work to do, that she were indulged and petted, and made pretty presents to, like other happy girls; that she were Madam Vivian's daughter and his little cousin, or sister, or relative in some way; that she had not to trudge off to Tolgooth Bay this bitterly cold wild March morning, and that she had a warmer and better jacket on. She looked so thinly clad, and so cold, poor little creature! One of those rich, handsome, satin-lined fur things, now, that young ladies wore in the Park or in Regent Street, would be just the very thing for her. Oh, how he wished there were a fur-shop within walking distance, that he might go in and buy one for her!

Stephen Tredennick's one great luxury and extravagance

was to make the most acceptable and delightful presents to people that it was possible for them to receive—from marvelous, wildly-longed-for buckhorn-handled, six-bladed pocket-knives to youngsters at school, to robes of cobweb muslin spangled with beetles' wings from Oriental climes for their sisters. He would get one for her as soon as ever he went back to London—the very softest and richest and warmest of the satin-lined fur-jackets which the young lady in the fur-shop could show him! And send it to her? No; he must get Madam to give it for him, and say something kind to pass it off; it was not quite correct—those droll landsmen's notions!—to give presents of rich clothes to strange young ladies.

Young lady? Why, was he not almost old enough to be the poor child's father? Well, no, not quite. She was about sixteen perhaps, and he was nearly thirty-three—more than double her age, but not quite old enough to be her father. Well, Madam could give the jacket, with his kind regards, to Miss Winnie Caerlyon, and say that he hoped she would wear it for his sake—would that do?

No; say—say, Wear it if she pleased for a keepsake. Sixteen and thirty-three—quite a child to him! Surely an honest plain sailor might make a little girl a nice useful present? Ah, sixteen and thirty-three; well—well!

Perhaps he might say something about it now, and prepare the way; it might please her—young girls were fond of pretty clothes, poor little things—it was nearly all the pleasure they had in life, except when they had a sweetheart. She would be pleased perhaps if he told her, and it would brighten up the wan, downcast, thin little face.

“You caught no cold from your wetting last night, I hope?” he began. “This is a very sharp morning, too. You would want a tremendous lot of wraps if you took many such morning walks as this.”

Here—to use his own mental declaration—as he strove to steer for the right port, the wind was taken clean out of his sails by Winnie's quiet rejoinder.

“I have plenty of wraps, thank you, sir, and the mornings are seldom as cold as this.”

But the wild March morning, in remorse, perhaps, for its severity to the poor little maid, was kindly propitious to Captain Tredennick's generous wishes; and, sending a sudden whirling blast, it blew a long, long tress of curling brown hair from beneath the silk net into which its luxuriance was

thrust, and wafted it right across to Captain Tredennick's shoulder, twisting it around one of his anchor buttons in a highly ingenious manner.

"You might give me that long soft pretty curl as a keepsake, Miss Caerlyon," said he, laughing, as he carefully unwound the errant tress; "it wanted to come to me evidently. Let me have it, and I'll send you home something instead of it, will you?"

"Send me home something first, sir," responded Winnie, shyly, but laughing also, as she tried to fasten the hair behind her little white ear.

"Is that a bargain?" said he, eagerly. "I will keep you to it, Miss Winnie. No, you can't fasten it; your little fingers are too cold. Let me;" and the Captain of the *Chittoor*, with a smile playing over his lips and in his sunny blue eyes, commenced adjusting Winnie's tumbled brown curls. "Mind, as soon as ever I send my keepsake, you must send yours," he went on, looking earnestly down into the pure girlish little face upturned to his own, as she murmured bashful thanks, and deeper unuttered thanks for his kind words, his kind voice, his kind manners—oh, this kind, great, tall, strong, brave, handsome Captain of the East Indiaman *Chittoor*!—shone from the dark depths of her lustrous gray eyes.

"You haven't promised yet, Miss Winifred," he said with brotherly pleasantry, keeping hold of her—she being but sixteen to his great seniority of thirty-three—"perhaps I had better make sure of my keepsake now! What is the matter?"

The sudden ejaculation was not unreasonable, for Winnie in an instant had sprung from his side and the caressing touch of his hand, her face flaming crimson and then fading deadly white, and the dark-gray eyes, which had glowed with such girlish enthusiasm of gratitude upon him, dilating for a moment with a sort of terror, and then blazing with a proud defiant anger that startled her companion as a new revelation of her character.

"Good-morning to you, Miss Winnie! You can take early strolls fast enough, I see!"

The strange voice had the peculiar disagreeable quality of being a naturally vulgar one, with a strong provincial accent, and likewise, being such, was tarnished over, so to speak, with a far more vulgar assumption of genteel tone and pronunciation, which assorted as well with it as the genteel affectation did with the provincial form of dialect, and as

well, or as ill, as it did with the face and figure which had suddenly confronted Winnie.

It seemed to Captain Tredennick, in his angry, startled surprise, as if the intruder must have sprung out of the earth—this spare, sinewy, undersized man, with a shrewd, fox-like, narrow face, and a gleam of a cold unpleasant smile in the cunning twinkling red-brown eyes, and curving around the thin pointed lips, as he darted a quick glance from Winnie to Captain Tredennick.

“Good-morning, Mr. Pascoe,” the girl said, coldly and distantly; “I am not taking an early stroll, though, as I dare say you know very well, but am returning home from Madam Vivian’s.”

The man she addressed merely lifted his eyebrows in a most disagreeably impertinent smile of disbelief, and shook his head slightly.

“Going home from Madam Vivian’s by Mennacarthen Lane and into Tregarthen House?” said he, showing the edge of his teeth, and the smile changing into a frown.

“I was not going into Tregarthen House, Mr. Pascoe!” retorted Winnie, the colour rushing back to her pallid cheeks, and her eyes flashing.

“Weren’t you? H’m! It looked very like it, Miss Winnie,” he replied, with an insolent assumption of easy familiarity.

“Who is this person?” demanded Captain Tredennick, hotly.

“Mr. Thomas Pascoe—the purser of the Tolgooth Mines, and a relation of my step-mother’s, sir,” replied Winnie, a flame of angry defiance in her cheeks and eyes, as she partly turned her back on that individual.

He perceived the action of girlish disdain, and the crafty underbred face grew full of the petty malice of a mean, little-minded man’s revenge for a woman’s slight.

“No need for ye to be so angry, miss,” said he, with a sneering laugh; “I never tell on ye to your father or mother! That is all the thanks I get—and stand your friend in many a way besides!”

“I don’t want your friendship!” cried Winnie furiously, in a sudden childish rage that shook Captain Tredennick’s belief in the patience of his gentle little maid very considerably. “I don’t—I don’t like you—and you know it, Mr. Pascoe! You are always tormenting me; and I had rather never see one sight of you or hear your voice—now!”

She burst into a passionate fit of crying, and Captain Tredennick stood in confounded silence for a moment.

"Ye're kickin' up a pretty rigs about it, sure enough," said Mr. Pascoe, with an evil look, and thrusting his hands deep into his coat pockets; "ye might speak civilly, like a well-behaved maid, I think. Are 'e goin' to stand here any longer, or are 'e going to come home to your father's house?"

"I am not going with you," replied Winnie, choking down her sobs; "and I will go home when I like, and stay out as long as I like, independently of you, sir! You have no authority over me!"

"Sir," said Captain Tredennick, raising his hat an inch or two, and dealing Mr. Pascoe a look of terrible quarter-deck politeness, "I will see Miss Caerlyon home, if you please. I overtook her on the road and——"

"Ye will, will 'e?" rejoined Mr. Thomas Pascoe, turning bully on the spot, and his genteel accent falling away from his Cornish dialect like thin stucco on a plaster facade. "Then I think 'e had better not let the Lieutenant nor his wife see their daughter walkin' home across the fields at the break of day with a strange spark of a fellow! She'd pay dear for her sweethearting ef they did, I can tell 'e!"

Winnie never uttered word or cry in answer to the coarse taunt, but she shrank as if a mortal blow had struck her. Tightening her little faded shawl convulsively around her, she extended her hand to Captain Tredennick, without daring to lift her eyes.

"Good-bye, sir—oh, good-bye! Thank you for coming so far. Please don't mind him," she muttered, her very brows burning in an agony of shame.

"My dear Miss Caerlyon, stop a minute, please," he said, haughtily. "You are labouring under a mistake, Mr. Pascoe. You cannot be very long in the mine-office in Tolgooth, sir, or you would have known me," he added, suppressing an explosion of quarter-deck wrath for the sake of the young girl by his side. "My name is Stephen Tredennick, of Tregarthen, sir; and, as I said just now, when you interrupted me, I overtook Miss Caerlyon on the road as she was returning from my aunt, Madam Vivian's house, where I met her yesterday evening."

"Oh, indeed—Captain Tredennick of Tregarthen! Indeed, sir, I did not know, I am sure," said Mr. Pascoe, resuming his refined accent with an effort, and smiling and rubbing the palms of his hands with an air of sudden fawning polite-

ness. "I know ye by report, very well indeed, sir—have heard tell of ye very often, Captain Tredennick. Long returned from your last voyage, sir?"

"No, sir—not long," vouchsafed Stephen Tredennick, shortly; "but I think in any case you need not have been afraid that this young lady was in improper company."

"Well, no, indeed, sir," said Mr. Pascoe, smiling again; "but I did not know—could not bring to my mind at all, sir—but that 'e were a stranger; and a young maid like Miss Winnie Caerlyon can not be too particular, sir, ye know."

He had edged himself up to Captain Tredennick's side, and was beginning to chat fluently, with an evident intention of constituting himself a third in the party. If he calculated on the sailor's easy good-fellowship and pleasant condescension, he was fated to be instantly undeceived.

"Sir," said the Captain of the *Chittoor*, halting abruptly, and surveying Mr. Pascoe with all the *hauteur* of the proud Tredennicks of Tregarthen, and a fresh accession of the haughty quarter-deck politeness to a presuming inferior, "I will take care of the young lady for the rest of the way, and will wish you a very good-morning."

Mr. Pascoe muttered a response rather confusedly and sullenly, and stood watching the pair as they went down Tregarthen Hill.

"Ye saucy young madam! I'll make e' hear of et agen!" he exclaimed vindictively—and resolutions of this kind Mr. Pascoe was not wont to forget, as that personage's numerous enemies were well aware.

Down Tregarthen Hill, up by the Head, where the road skirted the ocean cliffs, past Tolgooth Mine, and down by the little land-locked bay, where the Coastguard station, with its small, white, clean, bare-looking habitations, and the larger, whiter, cleaner, habitation of the officer in command, with the flagstaff and fluttering Union Jack before the door, were all perched high up on the sloping brow of a low cliff overlooking the deep water and blue-pebbled shore of the little beach below. Winnie's escort never quitted her until the coloured bunting fluttered above their heads, and from the white two-storeyed house at hand, with dormer windows in its seaward gable, came the echoes of the voices of crying children.

"Good-bye, sir; thank you very much." Her timid hand just touched his, and the downcast, pained girlish face, that had not been raised since the encounter at Tregarthen gates, was upturned for a few moments, gazing anxiously into his

own. "I would ask you in," she faltered, "but I fear you would not be comfortable. I hear the children crying, and——"

"Oh, no, thank you," said he hastily—"I shall have much pleasure in calling on your father some afternoon. Good-bye—good-bye, Winnie."

He thought he might take the liberty of addressing her thus; they were not strangers now, he and this anxious, timid, gentle, passionate little woman. Surely he might speak to her as to a dear little girl-friend! Who could misunderstand him, except one like that underbred fellow, who said—said they were "sweethearting!" Captain Tredennick went over the absurd phrase several times, and laughed each time, as he walked home—laughed as if the absurd idea were not utterly displeasing.

CHAPTER IV.

"Good-morning, Tredennick. I hope you have not waited for breakfast until now?"

The French *pendule*—an animated group of gilded nymphs and centaurs, in wild conflict apparently for possession of the dial-plate—had just struck nine "tings" on its musical little bell, as Madam entered the prettily-furnished breakfast-room, all polished maple-wood and soft dove-coloured hangings and carpets, relieved with touches of crimson here and there. Madam Vivian had no notion of breakfasting in an apartment, the shades of the upholstery of which might destroy the effect of her favourite morning-robe of silk-embroidered purple cachemire and morning-cap of white and violet crape.

"Waited, dear aunt? Of course I have."

"Without a cup of coffee, or chocolate, or anything after your long walk!" exclaimed Madam, sitting down before her silver breakfast equipage. "For I understand from Trehella, my maid, that you have actually been out of the house since daybreak."

"Yes, I have," said Captain Tredennick—mentally adding, "I wonder how Trehella knew!"

"Where did you walk?" inquired Madam. "Give me some of that Strasburg *pate*, please, Stephen. Did you go to Tregarthen?"

"No, I did not," replied Stephen Tredennick, without adding that he had never thought of it until he had returned to the door of Roseworthy Hall. "By the way, aunt, I saw your little friend going home this morning."

"Indeed, Stephen," said Madam, and a rather amused, malicious smile curved her lips. "Where did you meet her?"

"Oh, on the road by the Head," answered her nephew, silently resuming his roll and Strasburg *pate*.

"And you escorted her safely home, I hope, with your usual thoughtful consideration?"

Stephen Tredennick could not quite understand the refined banter in Madam's eyes and voice; he moved slightly on his chair and dipped his bread as he replied—

"Yes—of course. That is a wild, lonely road for a girl like her to travel; of course I went along with her until I saw her safe."

"She has travelled it a good many times these last three years," said Madam, carelessly, but with her keen, smiling eyes fixed on her nephew's face. "But how did you manage to scrape acquaintance with my little *protegee*, Tredennick? You only saw her standing in the doorway for a minute last evening?"

"Oh, yes, I did," explained Captain Tredennick, laughing in spite of himself. "I went down to the 'lower regions' to inquire of the servants if the poor little girl had gone home again through the rain and the wind, and then—last night, I mean—I saw her in the housekeeper's room. She appears a nice, modest, sensible little creature."

"Yes, indeed," said Madam agreeing very candidly and earnestly, her smiling gaze becoming more penetrating—"a nice little creature. Poor Winnie! she will make Mr. Pascoe an excellent little wife."

"Pascoe! That ill-tempered, vulgar—" began Stephen Tredennick, in some excitement, which cooled rather suddenly when Madam again queried—

"I was not aware that you knew Mr. Pascoe, Stephen?"

"Oh, ay—I do, though, aunt," he said, somewhat briefly; "and I do not like him. He is a disagreeable, presuming sort of fellow, I think."

"He is a very worthy, honest person," rejoined Madam, reprovingly, "and much attached to Winnie. I shall be quite glad to see her settled so comfortably, poor child. Pascoe has a fair salary for a mine-purser, and a neat little house, though it is on the works."

His wife! That underbred, insolent, fox-faced man's wife! To live in the bare, square-built, two-storey house, with its few small windows and smartly painted hall-door, and its beautiful, soul-inspiring surroundings of dull-hued piles of rubbish and broken ore-stone, hideous wooden tarred sheds, slime-pits, and creaking, groaning, shrieking, crashing machinery! Pascoe, the purser's wife—there to spend her existence—that pale, pure-faced, sorrowful little maiden, with her passionate gray eyes, and her wealth of beautiful silken tresses—the wedded wife of Thomas Pascoe—his, to have and to hold, for ever!

Stephen Tredennick glanced at his aunt's face to discover if she was in earnest, and then a sudden impulse of something like passionate anger filled his heart. Winnie Caerlyon Pascoe's wife—never!

He was very near saying so aloud, but restrained himself to say instead, very quietly—

“And what does Miss Winnie herself think of the prospect?”

“Think? Oh, I don't believe she admires him much—he is not an ideal lover, I grant—but what matters that?” said Madam, lightly and scoffingly. “Winnie has no right to indulge in any of that girlish, romantic folly; she knows that what she requires in marriage is an honest kind husband, who will give her a home of her own, with food to eat and clothes to wear—and very thankful she ought to be to get one.”

The tone, words, and manner all jarred on Stephen Tredennick—jarred very considerably, although it was in only a poor little stranger-maiden's interest.

“Well, aunt,” he returned, coldly and sarcastically, in manner very like Madam's own, “if marriage—which poets, and novelists, and artists, and those kind of fools rave about as ‘wedded bliss,’ as ‘crowning the love and honour of a life,’ and so forth—be after all a mere dry, worldly matter of exchange and barter, still one ought to make the best exchange, and barter as equally as possible. Looking at the matter from a commercial point of view, a pretty young girl, with a fair share of brains and social attractions, and of decent family, might barter herself for something better than mere clothes and food given to her by a very ill-favoured lubber of a fellow whom she detests.”

A ringing, sarcastic laugh came from Madam Vivian as he concluded.

"*Bravissimo*, Stephen! I begin to have some hope of you! You are growing romantic!" Then, quite suddenly, looking into the coffee urn as she spoke, Madam asked her third searching question, "How do you know that she detests him, Stephen?"

"Because—have you not just said that she does not admire him? I am sure no girl could!"

This was an evasion with a vengeance; and Captain Tredennick felt ashamed of it, and coughed two or three times, and resolved to tell Madam the whole story of the morning. It was odd the disinclination that came over him to deliver that short recital in the cold, clear morning sunlight, with Madam Vivian's keen eyes watching his face—about his invitation, and Winnie's refusal to go into Tregarthen House—about the tangled tress of hair, his request for a keepsake, Pascoe's coarse taunt, and all—ending with poor Winnie's one passionate allusion, as they went down the hill together, to the scene of which his delicate sympathy for her mortification would not suffer him to make any mention. "You must wonder at me and my friends, sir," she had said bitterly; "it is my misfortune that that man can claim my relatives as his, though he is neither relative nor friend of mine. I hate him, Captain Tredennick! They want me to like him, and that makes me hate him the more!" Her words were rather unintelligible at the moment, but they were clear enough now. Madam herself changed the subject, however.

"Do you really consider the girl pretty?" she asked, with a smile of compassion for his utter ignorance of the requisites of beauty. "Poor little Winnie! Why, the child has not a single good feature in her face; certainly her eyes are nice and bright, but so are most young persons'."

"Nice and bright!" those pleading, sad, true, deep dark eyes, with a world of feeling in their light and shadow! He did not understand them thus perhaps, but he felt, as a noble intelligent nature would, the power and worth and truth of the soul which shone through them, and had noted in them—which Madam Vivian doubtless never had—the fire of passion and glow of beauty created by that soul's strongest emotions.

"She has beautiful hair though," Madam added presently.

Stephen Tredennick, by a method best known to himself, by this time had arrived at the conclusion that he had better leave the beauty of Winnie's beautiful hair alone.

"Has she?" said he, coolly buttering some toast.

A flash of mingled amusement, vexation, and contempt crossed Madam Vivian's handsome, haughty face. Through the medium of Miss Trewhella's glib tongue, she knew that on the evening before he had both openly and warmly expressed his admiration of Winnie Caerlyon's one gift of undeniable loveliness; and now he pretended not to have noticed it!

"Men are all the same, full of sly double-dealing and petty falseness, where women are concerned," thought the fair *habituée* of ball-rooms during five-and-twenty years, with a curl of her lip. Then, with something like a pang of alarm or annoyance, she told herself, "He says nothing, because he admires it so much—admires her too!" Immediately she recollected herself, smoothed her brow, and laughed at her own folly. "I am too absurd," she said, mentally. "I think I have been dreaming."

CHAPTER V.

"Winnie, are the children on the rocks?" cried a sharp feminine voice.

"They are, mamma."

"Can you see them all there?" questioned the first speaker, doubtfully.

"I can, mamma."

"Where's baby?" was the ready interrogatory.

"She is here, mamma, creeping about."

"Take her up then. I won't have her second frock dirtied to-day. Take her up, and walk about with her. Letting the child make herself in a mess like that, just for laziness to take her up in your arms!"

"She was crying so, mamma, when I carried her about, and she is quite quiet now."

"I don't care whether she is quiet or not. You take the child up, and walk about with her and amuse her."

All this was screamed—in that soothingly-delightful, shrill, rasping voice which so many British matrons affect when in the shelter of their household—from an upper window in the Coastguard officer's house, for the benefit of Winnie Caerlyon, as she leant over the little whitewashed wall that enclosed the gravelled space in front, and for the benefit of any chance loiterer who might be at hand.

There was none apparently—nothing to listen to Mrs. Caerlyon's high-pitched, tuneless voice, as she screamed forth her mandates, but the white sea-gulls, to whom perhaps she unconsciously imparted lessons in vocal music, as they ceaselessly swooped, and dived, and soared, and shrieked around the craggy cliffs.

Winnie, aroused from her lounge by the low white breast-work that hemmed in the little yard or terrace before the house, where she had been mechanically watching the sea-birds' flight, the tossing of the green, froth-crested waves in the cold March sunlight, and the flitting lights and cloud shadows out on the great rippling expanse of ocean before her—Winnie's only relaxation, amusement, or pleasure in this world, but one—that one her tri-weekly visit to Roseworthy—took up the baby obediently, who resisted, as she did so, with loud peevish cries; but perseverance in kisses and caresses, and showing the gulls, and the "pretty, pretty sea," and the "beautiful little ships," stilled baby's lamentations at length, and she sat up in her sister's arms, in her little blue hood and cloak, like "a beautiful little dearie," as Winnie said.

This child—the youngest and frailest and sickliest of the seven—it had almost entirely fallen to Winnie's lot to nurse and care for by day and night, from her stepmother's prolonged indisposition at her birth and other causes. Winnie had "got the way" of managing, feeding, and soothing the little one better than any one else; hence washing, dressing, nursing, and putting to sleep were all left entirely to the patient loving hands that never shook or slapped the wailing, fretful little creature—as its mother did in a fit of temper sometimes—that were always ready by day or night to "take baby."

The young girl's rest, leisure, amusements, were all curtailed or cut off on account of "baby"—poor little fifteen-months-old Louie—who turned her piteous little face and outstretched arms away from every one to "Eenie." Sister "Eenie" sacrificed herself ceaselessly and patiently, because of the love, the strong, tender, incipient mother-love, that rose above all self-consideration in her true womanly nature, for the helpless babe dependent on her.

"Winifred! Winifred, I say!"

She hastened back from her wearisome parade, with the baby in her arms, to the upper window and its screamed mandates a second time.

"Take the baby down on the rocks with the rest. You shouldn't leave those children down there so long by themselves! And mind you don't let them wet their feet!"

"Yes, mamma."

"Has Sarah Matilda got her brown jacket on?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Well, mind you don't let Tom go near the water—his throat's as sore as possible. And, Winifred—Winifred, I say!—wait until I have done speaking, will you! I never saw such a heedless maid!"

"I wasn't going, mamma."

"Mind you don't let Caroline touch that nasty sea-weed, or those shell-fish she's always eating—tell her she shall have Gregory's powder if she does, and I'll engage she'll let 'em be fast enough!"

"Yes, mamma."

Winifred hurried away as she spoke, and, though she heard a renewed scream of "Winifred—Winifred, I say!" when she was half-way down the cliff-path, she only descended the faster, until she reached the pebbly shore, panting, flushed, and nervous.

"I could not go back then," she said in excuse to herself for her slight disobedience, if such it were. "It was better to come down and leave baby safely here. I couldn't turn just then—mamma knows that; but I can't go up now. Oh, I can't—I can't! He heard her—I am sure he did! I saw his hat just as she was shouting about Tom! Oh, I wish she hadn't! What matter though—what matter? How stupid I am! He has only come to see father. He said he would yesterday morning—and I have my old frock on—it's not very bad though—and this shabby old shawl! But what am I talking of? He's not come to see me—he won't see me—he shan't see me—there!" and Winnie laid her face down on the baby's blue hood, in a momentary quiver of disappointment, with a long sigh, and "Oh, dear, dear!" wrung from the keenness of some hidden pang of hope, or grief, or longing.

The next moment the ejaculation was repeated aloud, prompted by startled surprise, fear and pleasure combined. The "hat" she had seen on the terrace above, and fled from, was within a yard of her, having followed in her footsteps down the cliff path.

"I never knew a mermaid could run down steep rocky paths—carrying a baby too—so fast before."

"Oh, Captain Tredennick, you frightened me so!" she said, her heart beating tumultuously, although the slight shock of his unexpected presence had lasted but a moment. "My father is up on the cliffs near the look-out, I think," she continued, confusedly; "perhaps you thought he was down here?"

"Oh, no, I did not," answered Stephen Tredennick, smiling; "I came down after you. I don't know your father, but I know you; you must introduce me when we go up, if you please."

He seated himself on a stone beside her, half amused at and half admiring the shy flush on Winnie's demure little face, the evident fluttered girlish embarrassment—poor Winnie was expecting the interruption of Sarah Matilda and Caroline, with their pinafores full of wet sea-weed and live crabs, every moment—struggling with a certain gentle, old-fashioned, sweet little womanliness that seemed habitual to her, as she carefully spread her old shawl and placed thereon the baby that was so alarmingly quiet, gravely stooping to give her a soothing pat, or supply her with playthings in the shape of coloured pebbles and shells, while she conversed with Captain Tredennick, delighting him with her girlish simplicity of intelligence, without a fear or an *arrierepensee* that might have disturbed the communications of a worldly-wise woman.

Gravely and unaffectedly, in her ignorance of the sneered-at existence of blue-stockings, she gave him certain learned statements and statistics—quite correctly too—concerning some of the things which surrounded her daily life—the depth of water in the offing, the height of the cliffs and their gigantic formation, the force and prevalence of the winds, and the whereabouts of sunken reefs and rocks and dangerous bars.

"I hear my father and the men talking, you know," she explained; "and then I remember things very well."

Earnestly, in her glowing enthusiasm and pleasure at having found one whose thoughts were responsive to her own, and in her innocence of false sentimentality, the little girl in the shabby blue gingham dress talked to Captain Tredennick, with her dark-gray eyes sparkling, the colour deepening on her thin, pale cheek, and her nervous slender fingers clasping and unclasping in eager impulsiveness.

She spoke as she felt, and Stephen Tredennick listened with pleased surprise and deepening interest—more for the

speaker than her words—whilst Winnie Caerlyon talked to him of the beauty of the sea, of the glories of silvery moon-risings across the dark rippling ocean-breast, of the more solemn glories of the sleeping dawn, lying in the rosy flush of the brightening east; of summer days, when the waters lay spread out to the purple horizon in a burnished, blinding, dazzling mirror of pellucid blue, darkened here and there into great shadowed patches of olive-green from some fish-shoal gliding beneath the unruffled surface; of dark winter days, when the sea was a dreary leaden-hued expanse, all flecked with foam-crests and streamers of froth, as the wild waves rushed on like shrieking steeds to battle, and crashed with all their artillery of force and sound against the jagged black rocks of Tregarthen Reef, and the great dark precipitous face of Tregarthen Head, scarcely a mile beyond them, and rearing itself in profile against the blue sky.

Nothing had escaped the artistic perception of those glowing, passionate dark-gray eyes beneath the faded black-straw hat, with such a pitiful scrap of velvet trimming around its rusty crown. Amber sunshine gleaming through the translucent green of the great upraised billows, changeful opal lights on the shimmering waves, glittering phosphorescent trails and sparkles in dark sultry summer midnights, white and crimson and purple lengths of trailing seaweeds, and snowy shells tangled in emerald tresses of ocean-grass—she knew them all.

“You ought to have been a mermaid, Miss Caerlyon,” Stephen Tredennick said, with a smile in his eyes; “you would have loved your ocean home so dearly. Perhaps you are a mermaid—I am half doubtful about it. Perhaps you will begin a siren-song presently, and I shall be obliged to follow, under the spell of your voice, until I sink down in the deep green water out there, and never be seen any more of men!”

But all at once, as he spoke, the earnest little enthusiast with the artist eyes and the poetic words changed into a shy timid little girl in a shabby frock. Winnie remembered the thinness and brownness of her impulsive nervous hands, and folded them closely to try to hide them from Captain Tredennick’s keen blue-gray smiling eyes.

“There would be no fear of that,” she said, rather coldly and constrainedly—“you would not come, sir.”

“But I should though!” he persisted, the smile deepening, and a curious sensation coming over him of his heart quick-

ening its beatings, as he noticed that the flush on Winnie's pure little face grew swiftly crimson beneath his gaze.

The March afternoon was in all its brightness when they met—the March sunlight was shining clear and strong from the west when they rose to part. Not much more than an hour had they sat there together; yet it is probable that, if Stephen Tredennick had been offered the value of one of the rich Oriental cargoes of his own *Chittoor* to tell what it was that he had talked about to Winnie Caerlyon, whilst they sat side by side in the sheltering shadow of the great cliffs behind them, and at their feet

the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers thrown,

he would have found the task nearly an impossibility.

He had spoken about himself a little, about herself a good deal, about nothing in particular most of all. He had found it pleasant to sit there, beside the pretty slim little womanly figure in the shabby dress and with the rusty old hat, with fretted wreaths and broad soft plaits of rich golden-brown hair peeping from beneath it—curiously pleasant indeed, possessing for him that depth of interest and power of attraction that quickened so strangely the beating of the strong warm heart in his broad sailor-breast.

Pleasant it was to sit there, seeing his own handsome sun-browned face reflected in the depths of Winnie Caerlyon's beautiful passionate clear dark eyes—they deserved all those epithets he decided—continuing to take this peculiar interest in the girlish pale face under the old black hat—pleasant to sit there listening to her voice mingling with the murmuring symphony of the waves.

The pleasure of it prompted him to sit there and talk to her—pleasure, kindness, liking, pity, admiration, prompted him to sit there, shutting out, morally and physically, all the world beside from her sight, save the monotonous ripple of the great ocean, and Stephen Tredennick's smile, Stephen Tredennick's handsome face, his five feet eleven of masculine height and strength, the tones of his kindly courteous voice, the touch of his warm strong hand.

Yes; kindness, pity, admiration. He liked her so much—gentle, loving, sympathetic girl; he pitied her so much—poor little shabby, neglected, lonely, motherless Winnie; admired her so much—clever, intelligent, odd little creature, with the

beautiful eyes and hair, and wistful little white face. Poor little Winnie—Pascoe the purser's wife—in the future!

And she?

Her tender, yearning heart, grown womanly almost before its time in the intensity of her fervent imagination, her quick intelligence, her gifted brain, had garnered up a passionate wealth of love which yearningly sought for an outlet in the bare, chill existence of a hard, unlovely, work-a-day, commonplace life, ignoble in all save self-sacrifice; and now the master-hand—unknown, undreamt of until it came—had come, and the magic of its touch had turned the master-key and unlocked the garnered treasure—at once—for ever.

The passionate, girlish heart, in its wild, strong faith, its quick impulses, its unreasoning instinct, had sprung towards him with the kindling flame of passionate grateful liking in that first hour of their meeting, when he had kindly thought of the forlorn little stranger's comfort, kindly troubled himself concerning her, smiled on her as she thought none other ever had, tenderly touched her hand, warmly praised her one gift of rare beauty; in shy, warm regard and tremulous admiration when they next met, and he was kinder, pleasanter, more thoughtful and courteous even than before—when the strange delight of his presence bewilderingly charmed away all the cold and loneliness and dreariness of that cold, dreary walk in the wild March morning—that walk that had seemed in her remembrance since to lie through an enchanted land, until the rude interruption came and she trembled in fear—the new strange fear—of her uncouth lover's jealousy.

The purser had often hinted before, to her burning disgust and vexation, that the real reason of her exceeding desire to spend so much of her time at Roseworthy was that she might "set her cap at Madam's nephew;" and this before she had much more than heard of the probable return of that stranger relative of her patroness, Tredennick of Tregarthen.

The terror of the coarse words, of the coarser insinuations that might follow any avowal of acquaintanceship with Captain Tredennick, had haunted her from the first moment—poor, sensitive, unfriended girl!—and mingled distractingly with the timid, reverential regard and admiration that had taken such deep root in her fond, faithful heart—such deep root that, all unknown to herself (for such knowledge is apt to linger, unless forced on self-recognition) it had sprung up fair and strong, and its tenderness and

purity and simple sweetness had blossomed into love. In the agony of being humbled and mortified before Stephen Tredennick, poor Winnie became conscious of the birth of her love.

If she had seen him no more, the one short glimpse into the Eden of youth might have faded from her memory as time passed on; but thus it was appointed. The goblet of life is held to each lip; we must each drink as it passes. Deeply or slightly, all must drink of that bitter cup—

Filled with waters that upstart
When the deep fountains of the heart,
By strong convulsions rent apart,
Are running all to waste.

For “he who has not learned to know”—the depth and the darkness of the cup of life’s sorrow—“he has not learned to live.”

Stephen Tredennick did not know—how should he? Had he known—could he have seen the end from the beginning—he, the brave, tender-hearted sailor, the kind, wise, generous man, the honest chivalrous gentleman, would have thought it as right and kind and wise in him to take innocent, lonely, friendless young Winnie Caerlyon in his arms, and lay her under the cold sea-waves in a deep ocean grave, as to follow the pleasant impulse towards her society on this sunlit March afternoon, to seek her presence down on the quiet beach by the murmuring waves, to talk winningly, kindly, tenderly to her in his deep pity and warm liking, to look into the pure depths of her passionate eyes, to softly touch her little thin work-worn hand, and smile at the tremulous flushes on her ingenuous emotional face. He was not selfish—kind, generous Stephen Tredennick—whom his sailors loved as a commander who considered his men’s welfare as ever prior to his own comfort; but this time he had forgotten to consider the probable cost of what was to him a rare gratification, a hitherto unexperienced enjoyment, as he thought afterwards, laughing at himself for the romantic folly of the thought—

“Once as I told in glee
Tales of the stormy sea,
Soft eyes did gaze on me,
Burning, yet tender.”

A pleasure, a gratification, perhaps something more it was to him, who would not wittingly have injured one hair of the fair young head. But, ignorantly—perhaps thoughtlessly

—his presence had fallen in a shadow of darkness on Winnie Caerlyon's young womanhood, and his hand had made rough with cruel roughness the lonely path her weary feet should so patiently tread.

CHAPTER VI.

"If you will stop and take a cup of tea with us, Captain Tredennick, we shall be very happy to have your company, sir."

Lieutenant Caerlyon proffered the invitation himself, after sundry appealing glances and vain waiting for the lady of the house to perform the ceremony.

But Mrs. Elizabeth Anne Caerlyon, with the exquisite good-breeding she displayed whenever she wished to punish her luckless husband—who, unfortunately for himself, happened to be a gentleman by birth and profession—sat at the fire, dividing her attention between some woollen socks which she had drying on the fender and a baby's flannel petticoat which she was making, ignoring guest and husband alike after the first brief introduction, and feigning not to hear or notice her husband's words, although her high-coloured, sharp-featured, shrewishly-handsome face took a deeper tinge from vexation.

Winnie listened whilst her father spoke, and thought with mingled dismay and despair of that evening meal of which Captain Tredennick was invited to partake—of the seven children clamorous for bread-and-butter—of Tommy's inveterate habit of choking himself with his tea, and having to be led from the table in a paroxysm of gasps, and cries, and coughs, and tears—of Caroline's tendency to cram her mouth to a painful state of distension with buttered barley-scone—of the coarse table-cloth, the cheap, ill-flavoured tea, and her step-mother's utter neglect of all the etiquette of a hostess—and—worst, most dreadful of all—of Mr. Thomas Pascoe's probable "drop in" visit, and his and her step-mother's—whose cousin he was—holding forth for an unlimited period of time, in their sharp, unrefined, high-pitched voices and strong provincial accent—quite undeterred by the presence of a stranger—on the domestic affairs of all their numerous relations.

"Mamma is sure to begin about her aunt Mary's extravagance, and her cousin Bella's 'young man,'" Winnie said to herself, her cheeks burning at the prospect before her; "and the best milk-jug is broken, and we have no lump sugar in the house."

But Winnie's misery for the time being was terminated by Captain Tredennick's polite refusal of the invitation.

"You know, Miss Caerlyon," said he, with a smile, "my aunt dines late and I dare not absent myself."

"Oh, I know," responded Winnie, colouring and smiling. "Besides, Captain Tredennick, we could not expect you to care for tea just at your dinner-hour."

Mrs. Caerlyon turned sharply around, disclosing the flannel petticoat and stockings to full view—the angry pink flush on her cheeks rising to her temples, and her light, hard-looking brown eyes sparkling with displeasure.

"I think, Winiford," she said—she called her Winiford very often when she was vexed—"you might allow Cappun Tredennick to choose whether he would stay for tea with us or not. We shall be very pleased to have his company if he cares to stay; and, if not, why, we must do without him."

And Mrs. Caerlyon, as she spoke, flung the flannel on one side, and, rolling the pairs of stockings into woollen balls, flung them with a loud "thud" one after the other into a basket, by way of emphasising her final clause.

"Not this evening, thank you, Mrs. Caerlyon," said Captain Tredennick, pleasantly; "I may come in some other afternoon, when I have given Madam notice that she is not to expect me home at six."

Lieutenant Caerlyon responded—

"Very well, Captain Tredennick—we shall all be most happy to see you, I am sure."

Mrs. Caerlyon said nothing, but pelted the stocking-balls harder, if possible, arching her light eye-brows, and pursing her mouth with an air of what she considered to be cold *hauteur*.

"You had better see after the kettle, Winiford, and cut the bread-and-butter for the children; the maid can't be back from Thomas's yet this half hour," she said at length, in an elaborate manner, ignoring Captain Tredennick's presence, and giving him at the same time a broad hint to hasten his departure.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Caerlyon," he said with a slight bow.

"Oh," she cried, turning round from the cupboard—"oh, good evening, Cappun Tredennick."

She was ignorant enough, in spite of her cold *hauteur*, to expect that her strange male visitor would offer her, his lady hostess, his hand to be shaken in farewell, after the custom of Mr. Thomas Pascoe, Mr. John Williams, Mr. Edward Johns, and the other gentlemen of her previous acquaintance. The slight bow and cold smile—very slight, very cold, it must be confessed—although no breaches of etiquette, were to Mrs. Caerlyon nothing less than a flagrant insult.

"And John Caerlyon to stand by and see his wife slighted in her own house in that manner! Wait until she talked to him! Bringing his grand, stuck-up visitors in there and inviting them to tea; and Miss Winnie, with her airs and her impudence, making little of her father's house and her father's table before her fine Madam Vivian's nephew! It was nothing from morning till night, with that gad-about of a maid, but 'Madam Vivian,' and Madam Vivian's style and splendour. Never mind, but she would put an end to that some day! Making the girl as empty-headed and idle and stuck-up as she could be!"

The narrow-minded woman's petty jealousy against her step-daughter's strivings and longings after some of the beauty and grace of existence had not half exhausted itself, as she stood there angrily muttering her ire against "stuck-up" people into the sugar-jar and tea-caddy in the cupboard, whilst Captain Tredennick and her husband stood talking on the doorstep outside, when she heard a familiar voice greeting them, a stamp and rush of boots on the door-mat, and "Ha! evening, 'Lezabeth," announced Mr. Thomas Pascoe's unceremonious entrance.

"Evening, Thomas," said Mrs. Caerlyon, beginning to lay the table with a noisy clink and clatter, intended as a final hint to Captain Tredennick—"standing about there," as she phrased it, in her displeasure—as well as a token of hospitality wherewith to cheer Mr. Thomas Pascoe's hungry inner man.

He was apt to be hungry after his one o'clock dinner of "pasty" or pork-pie, and relished with an exceeding appetite "cousin 'Lezabeth's" hot-buttered barley-scones, with occasional treats of "heavy-cake," or sweet saffron-cake, at sir 'clock, when the work-bell had rung and the mine-work on the upper earth at least was over for the night.

Be it understood, however, amongst the honorable ones of

the earth, that Mr. Pascoe had no intention of meanly living upon his cousin's substance as he would have expressed it—of thus devouring “cousin 'Lezabeth's” barley-scones and “heavy-cake,” and libations of the peculiar fluid which she designated “tea,” without intending to make her some return. Away with such a base idea! Mr. Pascoe would have indignantly scouted it. His “cousin 'Lezabeth” understood him, and he understood her, and they had settled it quite pleasantly and conveniently between them.

In returning thanks for past favours he had informed “cousin 'Lezabeth” of his generous resolve for the future—possibly, continuing the tradesman-simile, “hoping to merit a continuance of the same”—of taking off her hands, out of the overcrowded home, and away from the charges on the overcrowded income, too burdened—two mouths to be fed, two bodies to be clothed and housed at his expense and not hers, from the moment he took possession of them. Surely no wonder that “cousin 'Lezabeth,” with this hope and incentive to generosity before her, buttered for Mr. Thomas Pascoe the best and hottest barley-scone on the dish, did not more than half fill his cup with water when she poured out tea, and cut such thick rich wedges of “heavy cake” for his refreshment.

Generously and good-naturedly he had promised “cousin 'Lezabeth” that he meant to take her step-daughter, Winifred, and her own daughter, Sarah Matilda, eldest of the seven, into dependence on him. He had rather a hard battle to contest about Sarah Matilda, though; as to Winifred, there was of course no difficulty beyond saying, “Yes, you may have her.” But Mrs. Caerlyon persistently tried to substitute Louisa Harriet, the puny, sickly, peevish babe, for Sarah Matilda, rising eight, “and as smart a child as need be.”

But Mr. Pascoe had no notion of being foolishly generous in the midst of his liberality of spirit. The sickly infant could be of neither use nor profit to him—Sarah Matilda might be both.

He meant to take the two sisters, and provide them with food and clothes and shelter, as has been said; but he meant that they should earn that support in a measure, by making his—Thomas Pascoe's—food, clothes, and shelter more agreeable and pleasantly comfortable to him.

He would make a wife and servant of the elder sister, as was meet and right and convenient, seeing that she had come to woman's years, and was a neat sewer, a tasty cook, and a tidy housekeeper—“when she is kept to it,” Mrs. Caerlyon

added parenthetically—and of the younger a handy little waitress, errand-runner, and co-servant, as was meet and convenient also; thus establishing Mr. Thomas Pascoe's prospective comfort, in the matter of shirt buttons, darned socks, cosy dinners and suppers, and general bodily comfort, very satisfactorily.

Matters being thus arranged so neatly and conclusively, it followed naturally enough that the generous originator of the scheme should regard his future property with the eye of a possessor.

Naturally enough; but Mr. Pascoe was amazed—bewildered, so to speak, at the strangeness of the idea—to discover, upon his looking with that eye of future possession on one division of his property—the part that was to represent the wife and chief servant—that it exhibited palpable evidence of a mutinous spirit, growing at length into open rebellion, grievously intermingled with fiery scorn and disregard of his worshipful and estimable person.

It acquired a higher value in his eyes, there is no denying, by this spice of difficulty in attainment—a value that grew higher as he began to deem it dimly possible that the property might never be his to have and hold, and that the personal comforts his selfish, mean nature prized so highly might vanish also. Another loss he had also begun to recognize of late—the loss of the woman—the future wife—a loss which he felt would cut deeper than all else—a loss the bare thought of which filled his greedy animal nature with a subtle tigerish jealousy. He had picked her out, chosen her, set his mind on having her, though she was “no great things of a beauty to look at”—not near as good-looking as Susanna Edwards, whom he might have had for asking. Dare any one think of taking her instead of him? Dare she think of giving herself, or wish to give herself, away to any one else but him?

He had hinted at this uneasiness of mind of his to “cousin 'Lezabeth”—that is to say, he grumbled when Winnie ran off gladly to Roseworthy of an evening, avoiding him and his detested airs of proprietorship whenever she could, saying that “the young piece didn't seem to have any great notion of settling down,” and that “it was sure to make the maid full of flighty, grand extravagant notions, to be keeping company with fine gentry like that.”

And “cousin 'Lezabeth” quite agreed with him, and was fuller of ill-will than ever against “Winiford's” grand

notions and fine-lady airs and ways; but, as both her step-mother and expectant husband knew that restriction in this respect would meet with passionate resistance from Winnie herself, and that Lieutenant Caerlyon would not have Madam Vivian affronted if he could help it, they were fain to be content with all the passive opposition and hindering unpleasantness they could muster, to weary and crush her into tamely doing as they wished.

"And what does that grand fellow, Tredennick of Tregarthen, want over here?" asked Mr. Pascoe, very crustily, as he listened to the sound of the conversation carried on outside, and missed Winnie's presence from the room.

"Came over to see the Lieutenant, I believe," said Mrs. Caerlyon, with a slighting toss of her head.

"Hum," returned Mr. Pascoe, slowly, lowering his brows over his crafty eyes; "take care, 'Lezabeth; I have my eye on him, I tell ye."

"For what?" inquired Mrs. Caerlyon, curiously.

"Oh, never mind," Mr. Pascoe replied, ashamed to confess such an unbecoming weakness as possible jealousy of Winifred's affections; "there's things I've noticed, 'Lezabeth. I hope you're not going to let Winifred go over to Roseworthy this evening?"

"'Deed, I don't know, I am sure, Thomas," said Mrs. Caerlyon, with another toss and in shriller accents; "it's not much matter what I like or don't like in this house. Between Miss Winnie's fine airs and nonsense, and her father's letting her do as she please, she might spend morning, noon, and night with Madam, playing her piano, and reading novels, and learning to make grand curtses, and sit on sofas properly, for anything I could do or say! I wish she was in tighter hands than mine, I can tell you."

"Hum!" said Mr. Pascoe, more slowly than before—"I wonder at the Leftenant to let her. I'll spaik to hem, 'Lezabeth; I'll spaik and tell him that he must keep hes daughter to home if he wants to get her married. It's not every man," continued Mr. Pascoe, with an air of serious questioning of that over-generous spirit of his, "that would care to marry a maid that was running here and there into the houses of fine proud gentry, and picking up with those raking, roving sea-captains of fellows. Et doesn't look well for a young maid. 'Lezabeth, I have my reasons, and so I tell ye."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Caerlyon, opening her hard, bright eyes in her eager, coarse, scandal-loving interest; "she met him

on the cliff-road, and he came part of the way with her, she told us."

"Ay," said Mr. Pascoe, tightening his lipless mouth into a thin line, and coughing, as he partly turned away his head, implying that that was all she knew of it, "I saw 'em together—quite thick Miss Winnie and the Captain seemed to be."

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Caerlyon, with a vexed, malicious laugh. "Upon my word! Miss Winnie, to be sure!"

Winnie's future generous lord and master screwed his mouth in a contemptuous smile, elevating his eyebrows and shaking his head, to show how little Miss Winnie's ill-behaviour affected his peace of mind, however he might regret her being so blind to her own interests as to run the dangerous risk of preventing him, Thomas Pascoe, from marrying her at all.

"Elizabeth, my dear, can you spare Winnie this evening?" Lieutenant Caerlyon put his head into the sitting-room as he asked the question reluctantly, ready to retreat at once when the usual hail-shower of snappish remarks, complaints, innuendoes, and grumbling should rain down on his devoted head.

"To go to Roseworthy?" demanded his high-tempered spouse, putting down a tea-spoon with awful deliberation, and surveying him with a stormy glance. "To go traipsing off along with Cappun Tredennick, I suppose? And you see cousin Thomas coming in here to spend the evening, and you know the maid's out, and——"

"Oh, hush, will you, my dear!" implored her husband. "Captain Tredennick is here yet, and——"

"I don't care if he is or not!" retorted Mrs. Caerlyon, more loudly. "What is he doing here? Who asked him? What business has a young maid to be gadding for ever out of her own house, off with people that are too stuck-up to notice her relations? A pretty thing——"

Here Lieutenant Caerlyon, in despair, closed the sitting-room door with a crash, and shut himself in, with the object of stilling his spouse's noisy burst of oratory.

"That is a nice wife for a quiet sort of poor fellow to live with!" muttered Captain Tredennick to himself, as Mrs. Caerlyon's shrewish tones reached his ears. "What possessed the man to marry that vulgar, bad-tempered virago like a Wapping landlady!"

Feeling that, from some cause or other, his presence was peculiarly unwelcome to the lady of the house, Captain Tredennick became anxious to rid her of it and relieve himself.

"I must bid my poor little friend good-bye; I suppose she will not be allowed to come back with me," he said, doubtfully, peering down the flagged passage that led to the kitchen. "I am afraid my asking leave for her has only made trouble."

A few steps down the flagged passage revealed a small tidy kitchen to the Captain's eyes—revealed a pile of bread being cut and buttered on the white table, and a busy little figure, covered up in a cooking-apron, going to and fro between it and the fire.

"Good evening, Winnie dear," said he; "I must go now. I wanted Mrs. Caerlyon to allow you to come back to Roseworthy this evening with me, but I think she was not willing."

"Oh, no," explained Winnie, breathlessly, "I couldn't go this evening—there are a great many things to be done."

"And Mr. Pascoe has come to tea," supplemented Captain Tredennick with an inquisitive smile, watching her closely.

Her passionate gray eyes blazed with a sudden light of reproachful anger, as she gave him one quick look, and then dropped them again.

"He waits for no welcome from me, sir," said she, coldly, laying down the bread-knife, and extending the busy little hand. "Good-bye, Captain Tredennick."

He took both the poor little toil-worn hands in one of his, and held them tightly in a warm, strong grasp.

"Good-bye, Winnie dear," he said, gently.

He pitied her so much—this pale, gentle, intelligent, refined girl, amongst such uncongenial companions (they would be her companions, and others like them, all her life through probably!) his heart swelled with mingled anger, compassion, and admiration for the small, fair face, with the firelight gleaming in ruddy gold on the silken sheen of her hair, and revealing the delicate violet shadows beneath her deep, earnest eyes, which should shine for the benefit of Mr. Thomas Pascoe and the mine-workers of Tolgooth, until her attractions all faded and grew gray and wrinkled with the world's troubles and the wear of years. The Captain of the *Chittoor* felt quite an unaccountable spasm of vexation and regret at the thought.

"You'll accept that keepsake that I am going to send you—will you?" he asked, rather abruptly, and still frowning a

little from that unpleasant spasm. "That stuffed flying-fish or string of coral, or whatever it is? You'll accept it, and value it for my sake—will you, Winnie? And it will keep you from forgetting me when I am far away."

Captain Tredennick would likewise have found it to be unaccountable why he hated to think that in the future Mr. Thomas Pascoe would be near and remembered, and he far away and forgotten. But there was a hidden spasm at poor Winnie's passionate innocent heart also.

"Yes," she said, looking up impulsively; "but I don't need a keepsake—I shall never forget!"

With the words of semi-betrayal, but more from the startled flush that rose with them, flashing into the frightened glance of her eyes, and flooding all her pale face with crimson to the roots of her wavy hair, the light of a sudden revelation seemed to force itself on Stephen Tredennick's mind. A flush of surprise deepened through his own sun-browned colour, and his calm, strong heart for a few moments fluttered in strange excitement. If they were selfish, thoughtless words, it is possible that generous, thoughtful Stephen Tredennick was scarcely aware of their tenor or purport as he replied confusedly to the girl's exclamation, smiling oddly and holding her hands tightly still.

"Whether you forget me or not, Winnie," he said, that strange fluttering at his heart making his voice quite hoarse and unsteady, "I trust that—that—I shall never hear of your giving your thoughts—or—yourself to any one but one who is well worthy of the gift—I trust I shall never hear it when I am away."

He paused a moment, still looking at the agitated face burning with swift-coming blushes, and, as he paused, there seemed to sweep over him the thrill of a strange pleasure, a strong, wild wish, a passionate longing, and the remainder of Captain Tredennick's judicious common sense and calm self-possession seemed to vanish before it.

"I must go," he uttered suddenly, in a kind of startled fear of the fascination that had fallen on him—the fascination, the delight, the bewildering sweetness of the pleasure which the grave gentleman, the steady, weather-beaten sailor of thirty-two years of age, found in standing in a small red-tiled kitchen, with rows of polished tin dish-covers shining on the wall at his right hand, a little black cooking-stove with a bright fire, a singing kettle, and a baking griddle-cake, whose delicate, scorching flour odour was agreeably distinguishable,

in front of him, and Winnie Caerlyon by his side. — “Good-bye, dear—good-bye, my pet!” he said, hurriedly.

He turned to go as he uttered the words, but the delight and fascination were too strong for Stephen Tredennick—the fascination of the presence of a little girl in a shabby blue dress. Suddenly releasing her hands, he caught the slight figure in his strong arms, and kissed her twice passionately; then he hurried out of the house and away from Tolgooth, and was half way back to Roseworthy before the fast-throbbing heart in his broad breast grew calm again.

And the little girl in the shabby dress stood a long time motionless on the spot where he had quitted her, wondering dreamily how it was that the world, that used to be so sad, had changed into such an Eden of joy and hope and love.

CHAPTER VII.

“Well, Miss Winnie, you have concluded to put in an appearance at last; I am sure I had grown perfectly satisfied in my mind that, for some important reasons of your own, your absence was to be perpetual.”

Madam Vivian was smiling, but she was not pleased; nor did she look so, though she sat in her favourite seat and attitude, her dainty feet gleaming on the velvet footstool, her black, glittering fan in her hand fluttering softly, and her handsome head resting against the dark-green velvet cushions of her chair.

“I couldn’t come before, indeed,” pleaded the little *protegee*, humbly and earnestly; “you know, dear Madam, I wrote and sent you word that mamma was not willing, and that baby was very ill; and Tommy had such a bad sore throat——”

“Oh, dear me, yes—I know—dreadful!” said Madam, irritably, evidently applying the adjective in impatient disgust, rather than in pity for the sufferings of the baby and Tommy. “You told me so before. What a nuisance to have such a pack of children in a small house, and always one or two of them ill!”

The tears rose to Winnie’s eyes, but not tears of self-pity. She had an unhappy home she knew, but she thought that if that hateful Thomas Pascoe were only out of her

sight for ever, and mamma did not scold her so often, and poor little Louie would grow strong and well, and she had money enough to buy a few nice warm clothes, she would be quite happy—for the small salary which Madam insisted on paying for her services went into Mrs. Caerlyon's pocket, untouched, to the extent of a single shilling, by the poor little recipient. They wanted it so badly—Sarah Matilda, Caroline, Tommy, Harry and the rest—how could she attempt to buy fine things for herself when they wanted necessities?

Mrs. Caerlyon, however, with characteristic plain-dealing, placed the matter before Winnie's conscience in the terse pithy sentence—"Every penny of it don't more than pay for your keep, Winiford." So, in order not to rob the family of the portion for her "keep," Winifred handed her salary to her step-mother monthly, as she received it, only pleading to have at least one neat dress, in order not to displease Madam. Poor Winnie mended, and turned, and washed, and darned the thinnest, shabbiest clothes of any of the family for her own apparel when out of the precincts of Roseworthy. Still—save and take care of it as Winnie would—that one best dress of dark merino was getting faded, and looked thin and poor, and annoyed Madam's eyes.

"I cannot think, Winifred," she said, sharply, after a lengthened survey of the meek-looking figure, pale face, and downcast head, crowned with its feminine glory of shining hair—and it seemed to-night richer, more abundant and becomingly arranged than Madam had ever seen it—"why Mrs. Caerlyon does not allow you to spend the pocket-money I give you on yourself. You have had nothing but that merino since last autumn twelvemonth; and your jacket is quite worn out!"

"It is, Madam," assented Winnie, colouring painfully; "but I am going to get a new one."

"Of what kind?" asked Madam, with the never-lacking interest to a feminine mind which such a subject possessed. "Get a nice respectable one, Winnie, child; it quite annoys me to see you looking so poorly clad. There! there! don't look so distressed—it is not your fault, I know."

"No, Madam, but—but I know I look shabby," she said, with quivering lips, the painful blushes burning in her thin cheeks.

He had noticed her being shabby and thinly clad; she had seen his eyes resting on the frayed cloth edges, the thread-bare cuffs and collar of her one well-worn cloth jacket, that

bitterly cold wild March morning. She had noted the quick compassionate glance at each involuntary shiver and tightening of her faded wrapping shawl—he, her idol, her demi-god, her great, tall, strong, powerful, gracious, beautiful, demi-god without a name; for how could she dare to say that she loved, admired, revered, worshipped Stephen Tredennick?

Impossible! Winnie's heart nearly stood still at the bare mental juxtaposition of her love—shabby, ill-clad Winnie Caerlyon, to whom Madam Vivian paid twenty pounds a year for reading to her and waiting on her, to the occasional exclusion and no small jealousy of her regular attendant, Miss Trehwella—her love for Tredennick of Tregarthen, the relative, the favourite nephew of Madam of Roseworthy.

She trembled all over at her own outrageous audacity as she sat on the little couch opposite Madam's chair, with the satin cushion and embroidery silks at which she was working lying in her lap.

Captain Stephen thought her shabby and ill-clad too. He had only seen her in that old worn-out jacket, and her second-best dress, a faded blue gingham; he would not know anything about the nice new jacket which she was resolved to persuade her step-mother to buy. He would never see it, for he had gone away—gone for twelve months, perhaps; it would be shabby when he came back—and she would have liked him to see her look nice for once—he, her hero, her grand, rich, clever, high-born hero; no, her idol—that was the term—it was not love so much as worship of his goodness, and graciousness, and tenderness. He who had called her his dear Winnie, his pet, and taken her in his arms and kissed her—she would have liked so to let him remember her nice and neat and prettily dressed!

"Well, my dear," said Madam, coldly, "what are you so absorbed about as to utterly neglect my addressing you?"

Winnie started in terrified confusion. She was only secretly idolising and worshipping the being whom her patroness loved best on earth—only hoping to idolise and worship him in secret to the last hour of her life; but oh, how dreadful if Madam knew! It were better for her to die on the spot!

"I beg your pardon, Madam; I forgot—I was thinking. I don't know what sort of jacket I shall have yet."

Madam raised her eyebrows in surprise at her little companion's perturbation.

"That vulgar step-mother has quite destroyed the girl's

self-possession," she said to herself. "Don't allow Mrs. Caerlyon to choose for you, Winifred, please," she uttered aloud, with a curling lip; "you had better have a neat black-cloth jacket, and a set of gray squirrel furs. That reminds me," she added suddenly—"my new furs may be home to-night."

"Your new furs!" echoed Winnie, with bright eyes. "Oh, are you going to have new furs, Madam? What sort?"

"Silver fox," said Madam, smiling. "I am tired of ermine and Astrakhan. Stephen is to send them to me as a present; he knows some place in London where he will get the very best, he says, from Russian merchants."

"Oh, how kind—how—how beautiful!" stammered Winnie, flushing and sparkling in an extraordinary manner.

"Indeed, I don't think it is kind at all," retorted Madam. "Stephen knows that he has behaved unkindly and displeased me, and wants to make up with a present."

"How—how has Captain Tredennick displeased you, Madam?" inquired Winnie, the blood rushing back to her heart, and leaving her very lips pale.

Madam's eyebrows were elevated again, in surprise at modest, timid Winnie's downright close questioning.

"By paying me a ten days' visit, after three years' absence, and making a business excuse to go off again!" vouchsafed Madam, with a frown. "But for his writing and making me such a faithful promise to come back in twelve months, and stay at least a quarter of a year with me, I think I should have declined to receive Captain Stephen on his return; still, I must confess that I knew he had heavy business matters to transact at Lloyds' and with several foreign merchants."

"Oh, yes, of course," said Winnie, white and red by turns with the anguish of hearing a fault ascribed to her idol. "I am sure Captain Tredennick would not go unless he could help it, when he knew that it would grieve you, Madam."

"Why, what do you know of Captain Tredennick, Winnie?" asked her patroness, half tauntingly and half sharply.

"Only what I saw of him, Madam," answered Winnie, looking down, and making wrong stitches in her embroidery. "You know he came over to see father two days before he went."

"Oh, yes, I know," said Madam, affably—"he told me; also that Mr. Pascoe had come to spend the evening, and that you treated him very cruelly. For shame, Winnie!"

"Why, I didn't see him or speak to him at all while Cap-

tain Tredennick was there!" exclaimed Winnie, hastily. "It was after he was gone that he—they went on so; and I went out of the house. The mean wretch! I wish he was at Jericho!" broke out Winnie, with confused, passionate tears and gestures.

"My dear, pray control yourself," said Madam, coolly. "Why did they go on so, as you express it?"

"Because—because—I don't know; because that nasty, hateful, prying creature," answered Winnie, shaking all over, and crying, "went on saying things; and mamma took his part, and father scolded me, and——"

"Oblige me, Winifred, by being a little more lucid in your language; and pray stop that unladylike crying and shaking," said Madam, in a very cold, hard tone, knitting her fine pencilled brows together. "What did Mr. Pascoe say to make your father scold you, and make you run out of the house?"

"He called me names, Madam," replied Winnie, drying her tears, and composing herself with a strong, angry effort—"said I was a gad-about and a flirt; and father scolded me, though I did not deserve it." Her pale, quiet face was flushed, and almost sullen, from a sense of injury. "As if anything that mean false story-teller could say would make me think more of him, or be afraid of him!" she added, scornfully.

"And whom did Mr. Pascoe accuse you of flirting with?" asked Madam, smiling, but looking rather perturbed also.

Winnie hesitated, dropped her work on the floor, and Madam caught a glimpse of a frightened spasm passing over her face as the girl said, reluctantly, the angry cloud darkening her patient brow—

"A person whom he had no business to dare to name—of whom he knew nothing. To dare to speak so!" she muttered.

"Ah," said Madam, looking both vexed and pleased, "I have no doubt he was wrong, Winnie. I am sure you are too cautious in your conduct for any one to be able to bring a true charge of forwardness or flirtation against you. You know girls cannot be too circumspect in their behaviour, my dear, nor too careful to avoid the empty attentions of men who give them a passing notice, and then forget them, only to remember them with a jest amongst their companions. Never err but on the right side, my dear," concluded the lady, who flirted gracefully now as she had done all through

her wifehood, when she had plenty of constant admirers—as she had done in the days of young belleship, when she reckoned her lovers in number like her gloves, and thought as little of them after their first charm had departed.

Winnie did not reply to the improving exhortation, although she had listened to it most attentively and believingly. She thought of those farewell words in the firelight of the little red-tiled kitchen; she thought of Stephen Tredennick's parting kiss; and the sound of Madam's words seemed to beat on her heart with a cold, strange pain. It was not the first pain that her love had cost her, poor Winnie Caerlyon! It was not to be the last.

"I am sure that it was untrue and unfair of Mr. Pascoe to speak so, Winnie dear," Madam continued, more naturally and kindly; "because I know that anything of that sort is quite foreign to your nature. I should be greatly disappointed indeed if I found that it was not."

Miss Trewhella's discreet, gentle tap interrupted the smooth little homily meant for the reproof, guidance, direction, and warning of Madam's *protegee*.

"A large box sent up from Trewillian station, Madam—from London."

"Oh, my furs!" said Madam, looking quite eager and expectant, despite her slighting remark. "Bring it in, Trewhella, please."

The great case was dragged in, and the cords and packing-papers were cut and pulled off by the united efforts of Winnie and Miss Trewhella—the latter genteel person moaning when the cords hurt her fingers, and the pincers caught her nails instead of the nails in the lid, and the former working away flushed, excited, and smiling at the thought of seeing Madam's new splendours and admiring them—oh! so much—for the sake of the kind, thoughtful, generous donor.

"There now—at last! Oh, my goodness! Dear Madam, it's magnificent—it's splendid! Oh, Miss Trewhella, did you ever see anything so beautiful? Look at the collarette and the muff, and the depth of that splendid silvery thing round the velvet!"

"It's very handsome, indeed, Miss Winnie—quite fit for a queen to wear," said Miss Trewhella, with a genteel air of complete satisfaction in having at last seen what she considered a perfect article; "light furs become Madam so much too."

"Oh, it's superb, exquisite!" murmured Winnie, feasting

her eyes on the richness and beauty and softness of the splendid velvet and furs, without one touch of envy or covetousness towards the owner, who already possessed several costly sets of furs and fur mantles and jackets, the least valuable of which were never given or promised to her, Winnie Caerlyon.

Madam said to herself that it was of no use to give a poor girl a single rich costly article which would match none of the rest of her attire, and most likely would be appropriated by Mrs. Caerlyon; besides, Trewhella would be jealous, and think herself wronged, and all that nonsense. For all Madam's rich silks and laid-aside millinery became the portion of that watchful damsel, who indeed determined at this moment to hint as broadly as she could, on the next favourable opportunity, on the extreme propriety of Madam's making over to her the Astrakhan jacket and muff which she never wore.

"Really it is lovely—quite a handsome present of Stephen's," said Madam, looking much gratified. "That Lyons velvet is superb, Trewhella; and what a depth of that beautiful silvery fur! It must have cost a great deal."

Miss Trewhella, diving deeper into the box, looked up at this juncture with an air of mingled reproach and comforted assurance.

"Another sealskin, Madam!" she said, lifting a pile of quilted satin and golden-black fur. "That makes two sealskins, an Astrakhan, a Polish ermine, a velvet and sable, a velvet and chinchilla, the Canada, other furs, and ——"

"What are you talking about?" interrupted her mistress, shortly, understanding the drift of the conversation perfectly. "That is not mine, Trewhella; it is some mistake, of course. I didn't want a sealskin, and told Captain Tredennick not to get one, as I preferred the silver-fox for a change. How stupid of the people! But what a beauty it is! It cost twenty guineas at least!"

If there was a feminine passion in Madam Vivian's calmly decorous, self-contained, equable nature, it was a love of elegant, costly dress; and, despite the treasures of her winter wardrobe which her maid had reckoned up, she gazed at the splendid sealskin with longing eyes, and buried her little white fingers in its gold-shaded velvety depths with a covetous appreciation of its richness.

"Oh, I dare say, Madam," Miss Trewhella said, eyeing the jacket in her turn with greedy longing, "that Captain Tre-

dennick thought you'd like a new sealskin too; though your other one is as good as new nearly. The Captain is so generous, and makes such beautiful presents," she went on; "you remember, Madam, that time you expected a black Maltese lace shawl, he sent all those splendid lace flounces with it and your white lace fan."

"Yes," agreed Madam, taking up the sealskin admiringly, and willing to be persuaded that it was an unexpected addition to her generous nephew's costly present. "I really did not want this—foolish boy!"

"And is that for you also, Madam?" inquired Winnie, amazed.

"Yes, I suppose so," said Madam, carelessly, as if a twenty-guinea sealskin more or less, were no great matter. "Help me on with this velvet, Trewhella; Stephen is bent on making the *amende honorable* with all his might. Ah, what is that?"

A note fell from the folds of the velvet as Trewhella shook it out, and Winnie caught it up and presented it to Madam.

"What has Stephen to say, I wonder?" Madam murmured, with a little satisfied smile, tearing the envelope open.

"'My dear Aunt'—h'm—'I have at last'—h'm—h'm—'hope you will like it—very best Siberian fur'—ah——"

A very long pause, in which Madam stared at the paper, Winnie looked earnestly at the rich gifts, thinking of the giver, and longing to hear every word he had written, and Miss Trewhella decided within herself that she would have that Astrakhan jacket and muff that very day—Madam might give her the other sealskin too without being over-generous.

The letter dropped from Madam's hand, and her steadfast gaze passed from it to Winifred's unconscious face—a little saddened. The girl could not help it while thinking what a beautiful lot of things—new jacket, and dress, and boots, and bonnet for herself, a little swansdown-trimmed robe for Louie, a new umbrella for father—she knew he would like a nice silk one so much—and a nice neat silk-velvet mantelet, the very thing she was longing for, for mamma—twenty guineas would buy, which amount had all gone for that jacket that Madam did not want!

The magnetic attraction of Madam's eyes made Winnie look up hastily; and the face she saw—so set and cold, with a hostile glimmering smile, like stormy sunlight, on the

proud mouth and haughty, curving nostrils—almost made her gasp with apprehensive timidity.

"I did not know that Captain Tredennick promised you a keepsake, my dear?"

"No, he did not—that is, I thought he was only joking," stammered Winnie, her heart beating madly. "Why, madam?"

"Oh, no 'Why' at all, my dear," said Madam, flinging the note on the table, the haughty nostrils dilating ominously, and the pale, handsome face growing stony in its unapproachable *hauteur* and cold indifference; "only I thought you would have mentioned it when you knew that it was coming to you. Captain Tredennick is so generous, really I think he would give away all that he possessed if he were asked for it. Don't crush my sleeve, Trewhella. Do you remember the time when all those Llanyon girls got Captain Tredennick to send them keepsakes, Trewhella? I thought I should have expired with laughter to see them all turning out in coral necklaces and Indian silk sashes every Sunday—the Captain sent them all one apiece."

"Oh, yes, Madam," said Trewhella, tittering doubtfully, not quite certain from what quarter had come her mistress's concealed vexation, and looking askance at Winnie, who felt her very limbs trembling beneath her.

"Whatever any one asks him to give is given at once," Madam continued, laughing. "The Llanyons were all wild for Delhi embroidered sashes and coral necklaces, and he sent them; and so I suppose you gave a hint of your wishes, Miss Winnie?"

"What, Madam? I didn't say anything," said Winnie, the tears rising to her eyes. "Captain Tredennick said, the evening he was at our house, that he would send me a flying-fish, or a string of coral, or something; and I said that I did not want anything. I did not ask him for anything, Madam."

Her throat swelled painfully with passionate excitement and reproach, and she turned away to hide the fast-falling tears.

"Dear me," said Madam, coolly sarcastic; "don't make such an hysterical piece of work of it, Winnie! I have no doubt you are very pleased and grateful for such a handsome, expensive present, but there is no need to cry about it."

"What present, Madam? I know of none—I see none—expected none!" cried Winnie, goaded into sharpness at last.

"Don't you see your fur-jacket?" asked Madam, with the same careless, sarcastic smile. "Wipe away your tears, child, and put it on, and let us see how you look in it."

"Mine!" Winnie almost screamed. "That fur—that seal-skin—mine! It isn't, Madam—he never meant that! Did he—did he say it was for me?"

A swift, penetrating glance was all that Madam vouchsafed her excited young *protegee*, as the former moved over to the full-length mirror to study the effect of her new furs.

"Now, I am sure, Miss Winnie," said Miss Trewhella, biting her lips and affecting to smile like her mistress, when the worthy young woman's very heart-strings were wrung with jealousy—"now I am sure you've got a present! A real seal-skin, no less! My, won't you be splendid!"

"Do come here, Trewhella, and see why the collarette won't lie smoothly!" called her mistress, impatiently, from the mirror.

Miss Trewhella obeyed, feeling ready to cry, hoping that Madam's jacket would not fit her, and wishing "that Winnie Caerlyon" to be banished in disgrace from Roseworthy then and there.

And Winnie stood dizzily by the table, looking at the darkly golden heap beside her, afraid to touch it, afraid to believe her own ears, or to ask a question.

"Well," said Madam, "what is the matter now?" Her own black Lyons velvet and silver fur fitted perfectly, and looked superb, and the consciousness of looking like a duchess—and a very handsome one—filled Madam with graciousness for the time. "Why don't you put it on, child? Let me see it. There! Well, really! Turn around. You must have a nice dress to go with it, Winnie. Really Captain Tredennick determined you should not be cold any more this spring!"

"He knew I was cold that morning," thought poor Winnie; "it is a charity gift to keep me warm! He need not—need not have insulted me. If he had sent me a book or a foreign shell, or any little trifle of remembrance, as I thought he would. But twenty guineas for a jacket for me!"

The frightful price of one article of her attire, the thought of what they would all say at home, the intuitive consciousness that Madam was displeased, the mortification of being made the recipient of what seemed to be Captain Tredennick's compassionate bounty, the secret rankling pain of such being bestowed by him on her, and the excitement of the

splendid jacket—all together quite overthrew and shattered Winnie's shaken composure.

"I don't want it—I don't want it!" she sobbed, unhooking and flinging it off, and, burying her face in her outstretched arms on the table, while Madam paused in surprise and vexation, until vexation got the mastery, and she quitted the room, bidding Miss Trewhella carry the fur-box after her—which command that damsel obeyed, with various sniffs and indignant glances at sobbing Winnie.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Miss Winnie's fur jacket seems to have turned her brain," Madam remarked, as her maid laid the new furs away in her cedar-closet.

"Seems to, Madam," responded the abigail, with a verjuice accent; "it was well for Miss Winnie she came over that wet night, else she might never have met the Captain. Twenty guineas for a jacket for her—well to be sure! He must think a great deal of her. Rich gentlemen take those fancies sometimes."

"What fancies?" asked Madam, sternly.

"Fancies of making splendid presents to young ladies they know aren't well off, Madam," said Miss Trewhella, very mildly, but tossing her head and making a contemptuous face in the depths of the cedar-closet.

As true as that there never was a man who was a hero to his *valet-de-chambre*, so true is it that the haughtiest belle, the most brilliant leader of fashionable society, never was, never is, never will be, a heroine, wonderful, adorable, unattainable, perfect, to the adroit personage who knows that she has a fashion of wearing her boots on one side, that she is constantly afflicted with chapped lips, that there are some cunning pads about that charming figure, or that the tooth next her left eye-tooth can be removed at will.

Madam of Roseworthy formed no exception to the rule. The only person on earth who slighted Madam's words and despised her pride, secretly, who sought opportunities to pay off affronts or grievances, and who actually, by dint of querulous, spiteful, declarations of her constant and unrequited devotion to her mistress, by despairing threats and manifes-

tations of heart-brokenness and wounded feelings under any provocation, had maintained an ascendancy greater than any one else over Madam Vivian, was her waiting-woman—Elizabeth Trewhella.

“A splendid present, certainly,” she said, coldly, feeling annoyed that she had allowed Trewhella to perceive her displeasure at her nephew’s rich gift; “but I think, if Captain Tredennick had asked me, I could have told him of something which Miss Winnie would have liked much better. If he had sent her a nice gold watch and a black silk dress, they would have been much more useful to her than one expensive article like that. Hand me the *Times*, Trewhella, and spread the sofa-blanket over my feet; I shall not go down again, I think—I do not feel quite well.”

“Not a bit of it!” thought Miss Trewhella, vindicating herself, as she glided softly about, with a meek, sorrowful expression, attending to her mistress’s wants. “You are in such a rage at the Captain’s giving her that fur jacket that you don’t want to see her again. The young minx! How ever did she get him to promise it to her? I’ll make Madam tell me sometime when she is in humour. I am with his aunt, slaving and waiting on her these ten years, and I never got but a few half-sovereigns from him at Christmas—and that vulgar old cook and the butler the same. Miss Winnie Caerlyon, a young chit he never saw before, gets a twenty-guinea jacket from him! Upon my word, he didn’t admire her fine long hair for nothing! A keepsake—no less! I thought Pascoe, the purser at Tolgooth, was the one to give her keepsakes, and not Madam’s nephew—Captain Stephen Tredennick of Tregarthen. And isn’t Madam vexed! She knows there’s more in it than she knows about; and that sly young one to pretend she was taken all of a surprise! And isn’t he sly too! Sober Captain Tredennick, that you wouldn’t think knew whether a body had a head on ’em or not! Madam’s up to him more than other folks. That’s what put her out so the morning I told her he’d been admiring Miss Winnie’s hair. ‘And how came Captain Tredennick into the housekeeper’s room?’ says she, as sharp as vinegar!”

Aloud the obsequious attendant inquired, meekly and respectfully—

“Shall I send Miss Winnie up to read to you, Madam?”

“No, thank you,” replied her mistress, very quietly.

“She’s studying that one page a long time,” said Miss Trewhella to herself, with an inward sneer. “I wouldn’t

stand in Miss Winnie's shoes for something. She'll catch it heavy enough, some time or other, about the Captain's grand keepsake. I wonder what will Pascoe say?"

"Madam isn't coming downstairs again, Miss Winnie," Miss Trewhella announced, entering the drawing-room with a cat-like step, to find Winnie sitting in the window-seat, her face pressed against the panes.

"Is she not? Is she not well? Am I to go up and read to her, Miss Trewhella?" she asked, starting up and displaying a pale tear-swollen face to the lady's-maid's keen eyes.

"She is quite well; but you're not to go up to read to her. She wishes to be alone," said Miss Trewhella, sailing about the room in a free-and-easy manner, darting sharp looks at Winnie, and envious ones at the fur jacket and sailing out again, humming a song, and leaving the door open.

"She is angry with me! Oh, what shall I do?" cried poor Winnie in despair. "Oh, why did he do such a cruel thing? I may as well go home again—I would ask her to forgive me, but I have done no wrong."

Hastily putting on her old worn jacket and little straw hat, she pulled down her veil to hide her face, and stole upstairs to the door with the green flossy mat and heavy velvet hangings shrouding the entrance to Madam's dressing-room.

She knocked twice without evoking any response, and then softly turned the handle.

"Who is there?" Madam called sharply. "Trewhella, why do you disturb me?"

"It is I, Madam—Winnie," came the faint little voice.

"Then why do *you* disturb me?" Madam demanded, more sharply and angrily. "If I required your presence, I should have sent for you."

"I only came to ask if I am to go home, Madam, as Trewhella said you were not coming down any more."

"Yes—you may," responded her patroness, shortly. "Shut the door, please, and draw the curtain."

"Good evening, Madam."

"Good evening."

For one minute Winnie stood outside the velvet-hung portal, battling with her grief and mortification, and then the measure of injustice that had been so unfairly dealt her touched the spring of her yet unbroken, strong spirit.

"Madam Vivian has no right to treat me so," she said, and her tears dried as if by fire, and she walked steadily downstairs, and was passing out through the hall, when the sight

of Mrs. Grose standing in the drawing-room, holding up the sealskin jacket, and giving vent to whispered ejaculations of rapture arrested her steps.

"Miss Winnie dear, come here!" she cried, clasping her hands. "This is what the Captain sent you home. Oh, my dear Miss Winnie, pet, ain't it most beautiful! Miss Trehwella told me. And it cost twenty guineas, and is fit for Madam herself!"

"But is quite unfit for me," observed Winnie, quietly and bitterly; "it was a foolish present for Captain Tredennick to send, and Madam thinks so too, and Miss Trehwella."

"Miss Trehwella!" echoed Mrs. Grose, getting as red as one of her own joints of beef. "And what has Miss Trehwella to say as to what's proper or not proper for you, Miss Caerlyon, to wear, I'd like to know? And, if Captain Stephen hev sent you a splendid jacket, what hev Miss Trehwella to say to it? And, if Captain Stephen hev took a fancy to you, Miss Winnie, aren't you a lady, same as any lady he might take a fancy to? And where could he find——"

"Oh, Mrs. Grose—dear darling nurse—hold your tongue!" Winnie cried in dismay, stifling the worthy woman's indignant outpouring. "Oh, don't—don't! I wish he had not! It was kind of him, but I shall never wear it or touch it! Good evening, Mrs. Grose—I am going home."

"Without a bit or sup," Mrs. Grose cried, "and I baked lemon cheese-cakes for supper! Wait a minute then—to please me, Miss Winnie!" she begged, as Winnie shook her head and pushed away the detaining arms.

Breathlessly the kind-hearted rotund creature hurried down to the larder, pantingly she came up again, rushed about for a minute to find a wrapping-paper, and overtook Winnie as she went sadly and slowly across the grounds.

"You—you—shall have—some o' my cheese-cakes, Miss Win—nie, dear! I made 'em most—a purpose for—you! Lor, I'm out o'—breath—clean! There, my lovey, don't fret. She'll—be a—grand la—lady yet!"

The fragrant-smelling, flaky little parcel of dainties could not carry much consolation with it, though her old nurse's tender kindness touched Winnie's sore heart. She wished the children were there, and opened the paper to see how best she could divide her present.

"Four: cut them in halves, and they'll all have a bit and a piece over—Tommy shall have it, as he is ill;" and then, in

the midst of the generous little sisterly calculation, a message of consolation came to poor Winnie herself.

The wrapping-paper was none other than the letter which Captain Tredennick had sent with his present, which Madam had flung aside in her displeasure, and Mrs. Grose had picked up in her haste.

"And I also send a sealskin jacket, which I hope, dear aunt, you will give from me to your little friend, Miss Winnie Caerlyon. I told her that I should send her a keepsake when I went away; and I think this is the best and most suitable one I could give her. I hope she will not be offended at my doing so. Please say something nice and gracious, like yourself, when giving it, as I have only offered it in a very rough sailor-fashion; and say I hope she will wear it as a sailor's keepsake—in kindly remembrance of the giver."

Courteously, kindly, gently, cordially, he had proffered his gift, and she had scorned it, flung it aside, hated it, as an insult and a wrong!

But Madam had given no gracious message, no kindly word—neglected his earnest request—passed by the courtesy and gentleness that he strove to put into her words.

"Madam Vivian has no right to treat me so!" she said again; and her girlish face grew hard and lined with passionate womanly feeling. "Madam Vivian has wronged me!"

And, in that half hour, while she sat there by the lonely roadside, in the chill gloomy evening, gazing at Stephen Tredennick's words—which came like balm to the crushed sad spirit, the pained lonely heart—and thinking of Madam Vivian's insulting coldness and injustice, the gentle timidity of Winnie's girlish love passed away for ever—changed into a proud woman's deep silent passion, which she might die for but never deny.

She folded the crumpled letter neatly, kissed it, and hid it in her dress.

"In kindly remembrance of the giver," she said—"Stephen Tredennick, while I have a heart to beat with love for him!"

CHAPTER IX.

All through the long hot summer day—the blazing sunlight reflected from the great blue molten mirror of the ocean, from the granite face of the sheer precipitous cliffs, and with dazzling glare from the snowy whitewashed walls of the Coastguard station, the flashingly-bright windows of which concentrated the rays to a focus like so many burning glasses—had the hot busy hours passed in the work that seemed never to end, the tasks that were only accomplished in series to make room for more.

Winnie had washed, starched, and ironed all those neat muslin blinds, and put them up smooth and spotless again; she had finished the little frock begun two days ago for Louie, and hummed a line or two of Tennyson's "Cradle Song"—

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the Western Sea!

—as she tried the garment on, and found that it fitted the baby owner so nicely; she had baked the bread and "pasties," and peeled the turnips and potatoes for dinner; she had had some trifling occupation afterwards in the shape of sprinkling and folding three dozen "pieces" of clothes and despatching them to be mangled; she had darned two table-cloths and three pairs of boys' socks; she had laid the table for tea, and polished the spoons and teapot with whitening and chamois leather; and, on Tommy distinguishing himself by upsetting the tea-kettle on the stove, she had to undertake a hasty refilling, reboiling, replenishing of the fire, and wiping up of water and ashes.

True, Winnie had done this all unaided, patiently, uncomplainingly; and "pity 'twas 'twas true" that it was counted but as a thankless matter-of-course, deserving of no commendation or alleviation.

She thought so herself, but she had become so used to it. There are many—scores, hundreds, thousands—such patient body-and-soul wearers toiling for others, not themselves, their toil evoking in return neither surprise nor gratitude.

There was nothing wonderful, therefore, in this long summer day's toil, which had left Winnie's face so pallid and

weary, her small thin hands and arms so soiled and discoloured, which had roughened all that twisted-up mass of brown hair, and had made the old blue gingham gown, now in the last stage of shabbiness, so stained and frayed—only it was a pity.

Nature had meant that intellectual brow, that expressive changeful face, those deep, passionate eyes, that slender, nervous, supple form, as a casket to enshrine rare endowments, if it lacked outwardly her choicest workmanship.

It was a pity, but the girl did not know it, or was only vaguely conscious of the dull pain of remembrance of months and years of toil like this. It had always been so—it would always be so in the weary years to come, she supposed, until she lay in that mossy grave in Trewillian churchyard, and beneath the name of "Winifred, the beloved wife of John Caerlyon," was written that of her only child.

Pale-faced, hard-worked little girls, in lonely hours, have a morbid fancy for this prospect of mossy graves under weeping willows. But just now Winnie Caerlyon was conscious only of her soiled hands, her shabby old gown, and her unkempt hair, and of a longing for her toilet to be finished, that she might sit down to rest.

"Winnie, is the kettle boiled?"

"No, mamma—it's singing."

"Singing! What's it only singing for, at six o'clock in the evening—eh?"

"It was just boiling, mamma, half-an-hour ago, and Tommy spilled it."

"Spilled it! That's pretty work! What did ye let the boy go meddling with the kettle for? And—my patience, Winiford!"—at this point Mrs. Caerlyon had entered the kitchen—"is that the set-out you are in at this hour? A perfect muck! Why, I never saw such a maid as you are for a sloven! I suppose, since you are not off to Roseworthy every evening, you don't think it worth while to make yourself decent in your father's house."

"I am going to tidy myself in a minute, mamma—I have only just cleaned the spoons and tea-pot."

"Spoons and tea-pot at this hour o' the evening! What next, pray? Do you never have a proper time for your work, that you should keep yourself in a mess like a mine-girl till people are expecting to sit down decently to meals?"

Silence on unhappy, lazy, slovenly Winnie's part. She drooped her head for a minute under the accustomed hail-

storm of "nagging," and turned aside from her step-mother's hard brown eyes, as she stood in the middle of the floor, her brows magisterially bent on the shabby slender little figure. She turned aside, and her gaze, mechanically seeking the hot calm evening sunlight, the liquid turquoise of the sleeping ocean, and the dark cool shadow of the cliffs falling athwart the little bay, now rippling smooth and deep at high-water mark, became in an instant arrested.

Forgetful alike of her *deshabille* and her step-mother's presence, she stood as if rooted to the spot, with parted lips and fast-beating heart, staring at two figures standing a few yards beyond, at the head of the pathway that led down the cliffs.

"Trehwella!" she gasped. "Then Madam's home again! Is she coming hither? And who is that beautiful young lady?"

At the instant Trehwella turned, and at a glance her sharp eyes detected the face at the open window.

"Good evening, Miss Winnie! Beautiful day, is it not?" she said, loudly and familiarly, advancing a step or two in glorified consciousness that the level rays of the brilliant sunshine were displaying the flounces of her light blue silk dress, and the deep embroidery of her white petticoat, to the utmost advantage. "I dare say you are astonished to see me?"

"I—I am," stammered poor Winnie, fully aware that the level rays of sunlight were displaying her disarranged hair, soiled collar, and tucked-up sleeves to the utmost advantage in another way. Ashamed to stay, but too proud to rush away and hide, she remained, in spite of her step-mother's half-audible commands before Miss Trehwella and the beautiful young lady—a tall, finely-developed girl, young, handsome, haughty, self-willed-looking, with an easy carriage of her proud head and aristocratic figure, and with a nameless grace and elegance in the simplicity of her girlish costume, expensively-chaste as were its rich material and exquisite Parisian fit and shape.

A lady undoubtedly, from the calm *insouciance* of her unruffled self-possession, from the inquiring gaze of her deep-set brilliant eyes beneath their haughty brows, from the light poise of the tall, full figure—as far removed from Miss Trehwella's self-assurance and familiarity as was the undiscoverable stamp of perfection on that wonderful, simple costume of dove-coloured, satin like material, with its fringes of deeper shade, its hanging folds and sleeves with silken linings,

the accurately-matched, treble-buttoned gloves, and the hat a mass of snowy ostrich feather and pale golden gossamer, from the showy smartness of the lady's-maid's rustling silk and stiff white skirts.

She had quietly surveyed Winnie for a few moments, as if studying the effect of her figure in the framework of the window, and rather disapproving of it by the fine knitting of the lines on her low wide forehead, when the name pronounced in Miss Trehwella's shrill voice fell on her ear. She made a slight movement of surprise, and then a wide opening of the proud bright eyes, and a faint curve on the short full-lower lip, were perceptible.

"I am surprised," Winnie said, confusedly, colouring; "I did not know that Madam was home again. I hope she is quite well, Miss Trehwella?"

"Is that Miss Winnie Caerlyon?" the young lady demanded, in a clear imperious voice; and Miss Trehwella, with a confidential little aside smile, said, "Yes, Miss Mildred—that's her, poor thing!"

"Madam's home again, sure enough," she replied, in a louder tone, to Winnie, who was watching the proud handsome girl with a kind of fascination; "and Miss Mildred Tredennick's come to stay with her."

"I am Miss Tredennick, Trehwella. I have corrected you before for naming me in that school-room fashion," interrupted the young lady, haughtily; and, vouchsafing Winnie only another coldly-surprised glance, she turned lightly on her heel, and walked off towards the cliff-path again, evidently to permit the lady's-maid and the lady's-maid's friend—the shabby hard-worked-looking girl—to have a chat together.

That haughty parting glance which she intuitively understood, stung Winnie into remembrance of herself.

"I am glad to hear that Madam is well," she said, as coldly and distantly as Miss Tredennick could have spoken. "Good evening—the young lady is waiting for you."

"Well, but—Miss Winnie—Miss Winnie!"—Miss Trehwella ran over to the window, and actually thrust her smart summer bonnet, with its pink roses and white lace, into the kitchen—"aren't you coming over to Roseworthy again, eh? You'll be coming over to-morrow or next day, won't you?"

She knew well that Winnie Caerlyon was not coming to Roseworthy to-morrow, or next day, or any day afterwards, but she could not resist the feminine hankering to flaunt over

a fallen rival, made doubly triumphant—such was the noble calibre of Miss Trewhella's mind—by the consciousness of her new blue flounced silk and Winnie Caerlyon's forlorn shabbiness.

"Not unless Madam sends for me," said Winnie, not pausing to look round as she hastily quitted the kitchen, and ran upstairs to the little room with the dormer window, shared with two of her young step-sisters, where she pulled off her working dress, whilst tears of mortification and pain rolled down her flushed cheeks.

She was not a philosopher, poor Winnie!—only a woman—and a young, sensitive woman, of girlish years.

"That was his cousin, that beautiful young lady, who looked at my dirty dress and untidy hair," she said, with a suppressed, bitter cry. "I couldn't help it—I was doing so much work to-day. But oh, how she despised me as a poor, common, servant-like girl! She will never think of me as anything else."

She bathed her pallid, weary face in water; she braided up the dark, silken masses of her hair above the marble-white brow and violet-shadowed eyes; she hastily arrayed herself, in spite of aching arms and nervous hands, in her neat, freshly-ironed print dress, with its clean lace frill and tiny blue-ribbon bow; but the tears came again and again into the sad dark eyes as she took a hasty last glance at the little looking-glass.

"No," she said, drearily and quietly, "I am nothing but a poor, plain, hard-working girl, who does the work of a servant. I should never forget that. Mildred Tredennick never will. *He* never would if he saw me as she did this evening!"

CHAPTER X.

"What a sulky sort o' way that there maid do go on with to be sure!" Mr. Pascoe remarked, with a dissatisfied scowl in the direction of the wearer of the print dress, who was sitting, outside the window, in the soft summer twilight, with little, peevish, whimpering, clinging Louie in her arms as usual.

"Ah!" responded Mrs. Caerlyon, with a toss of her head,

"it's because she's not off to her grand company every evening as she used to do."

"Ay," Mr. Pascoe said, with a deeper scowl; "'twas high time to stop that there running hafter grand ladies and grand gentlemen—high time, 'Lezabeth!"

"Well," explained Mrs. Caerlyon, shortly, as there seemed to be a certain amount of blame charged to her in her worthy cousin's accents, "'twas Madam stopped it herself—all you'd have said for a twelvemonth wouldn't have made her leave else."

"And you'd 'ave hallowed her to stay, would 'e?" Mr. Pascoe demanded, in a higher key, transposing aspirates abundantly in his vehemence. "You'd 'ave hallowed that maid to go on making of herself a country talk, with her visits to Roseworthy and her coming home at daybreak with strange sea-captains, and getting grand presents from 'em, would 'e—would 'e? Then I tell 'e, 'Lezabeth, you might pretty soon 'ave keepped 'eer maid shut up at home, for she couldn't show her face abroad!"

"What d'ye mean by that, cousin Thomas?" asked Mrs. Caerlyon, angrily. "The maid haven't lost her good name—have she—that ye should speak like that?"

"She's not thought none the better of, I can tell 'e," Mr. Pascoe retorted with a nod of assurance, his foxy face hardening into a spiteful smile. "Miss Winifred is none the better for her grand friends and her grand presents—I heared many a one making remark 'bout it."

"They were talking greatly of that fine fur-jacket the Captain gave her, I know," said the step-mother, her better feelings of justice and common-sense contending with her jealousy of "Lady Winiford"—as she had taken to calling her when in special moods of ill-temper—and her provincial keen-edged delight in scandal of whatever nature. "I heard aunt Mary and cousin Anna Maria Carthew going on about it in a great way, saying that he must mean something by it—that he wouldn't go give a twenty-guinea jacket to a girl unless he meant to go farther; but 'tisn't likely, I think, though Winifred's genteel-looking sort of girl when she's dressed out."

If Mrs. Caerlyon meant this as a politic speech, implying that Mr. Pascoe had better make sure of Winifred whilst he could—his tardy proceedings in this matter being a vexation of spirit to her, now especially since Winifred's salary was lost—she signally failed. Mr. Thomas Pascoe, having a

secret consciousness that, as a rival to Captain Tredennick, he would not figure very nobly, and possessing likewise a great amount of Uriah Heep's peculiar description of "'umble-ness," was stung into a dangerous state of defiance of "cousin 'Lezabeth" and everybody else.

"No, 'tesn't likely—'tesn't very likely," he said, sneering in an ugly fashion that distorted his thin lips and long sharp nostrils—" 'tesn't very likely that Tredennick o' Tregarthen's coming to ask 'e for your daughter; and ye'll wait a pretty good time, 'Lezabeth, before hanybody will, 'tis my opinion, and so I tell 'e. Tredennick o' Tregarthen dedn't come after her for no good, as I heard it remarked, weth his fine talk and his twenty-pound jacket to a poor maid. And ef ye choose to let her go to ruin ye may, and——"

"Hold your tongue!" said "cousin 'Lezabeth," in a passion. "Tredennick o' Tregarthen's never going to darken these doors again; and the maid stays at home and does her work, and what more would ye have? If you'd married the girl six months ago, you'd have no need to be watching and prying after her now; and if you don't mean to marry her, you'd better hold your tongue, I tell ye! What's a maid but her good name? You'd best not let John Caerlyon hear ye taking away his daughter's character!"

She flung her sewing-thimble, reel, and scissors violently into her basket after the energetic manner which the good lady affected when she laboured from an access of spleen, and dashed out of the room with somewhat unnecessary speed and noise.

"What are ye keeping the child out there for, with the dew falling on her?" she demanded, harshly, from the porch-door.

Winifred Caerlyon, roused from her long deep reverie, withdrew her yearning eyes from the far twilight horizon of the ocean, lost in the depths of silvery shrouding haze; she had been singing the "Cradle Song" again to soothe Louie—

"Over the rolling water go,
Come from the drooping moon and blow—
Blow him again, again to me,
While my pretty one sleeps—
While my loved one sleeps!"

—and the dark deep eyes were distended and glowing with the passion of wild fancies and hopes and longings, gazing out over the wide heaving expanse of ocean veiled in twilight shadows.

"She is covered with my shawl, mamma—I will bring her in now."

The voice was very gentle and faint with weariness, the quiet face very white and patient, the drooping eyelids languid with "the weight of unshed tears."

Elizabeth Caerlyon, shrewish and unloving, had yet a heart which could be touched, and Thomas Pascoe's late insinuations had at last provoked her into taking her step-daughter's part.

"I've heard of a dog in a manger," she muttered, partly audible for Mr. Pascoe's benefit—"there are people who'll neither take a thing themselves, nor let a thing be for other people! You've got a pretty white face," she added, sharply but not unkindly, as Winifred passed her in—"what's the matter?"

"Nothing, mamma—I am tired," said Winnie. "May I go to bed?"

"Pascoe's here," hinted her step-mother, shortly.

There was a kind of anguish in the girl's haggard look as she repeated pleadingly—

"I am so tired, I can not speak to any one. May I go to bed?"

"Yes, of course!" said Mrs. Caerlyon, snappishly. "What did ye go working yourself like that for? Work'd keep, I think."

Nevertheless she unlocked a certain neat, yellow-painted cupboard in the kitchen, took out a bottle with a dark fragrant spirit, carefully mixed a portion with hot water and sugar in a tumbler, and took it upstairs to the little room where the pale evening light fell through the dormer window on the patchwork coverlet of the narrow bed and the white face of the dark-haired girl lying on the one small hard pillow.

"You drink this now, Winnie," she said, shortly. "You're like one had got a chill. It'll send ye sound asleep."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, mamma," returned Winnie, struggling up in surprise. "I am only tired, though."

The trembling voice broke down in a sob, which evidently had not been the first since she had lain down beneath the patchwork coverlet.

"What on earth are ye crying for?" asked Mrs. Caerlyon, impatiently. "Because you're not off at Roseworthy, I suppose?"

"Oh no, no, no!" Winifred burst out in stormy weeping.

"You know I'll never go there again—never, unless she came and asked me kindly, and apologised to you and father. Madam did not treat me as she ought. I was sorry a good deal after she went off so suddenly to Kent without telling me—only that one short note with my salary due! It was so unkind!"

"You needn't waken up all the children," interposed Mrs. Caerlyon, warningly. "Then, if you're not crying about her, what are ye crying for?"

"I didn't feel very well—I don't know," Winnie faltered, crying more quietly, though her suppressed sobs shook the narrow bed.

"Because Pascoe's here?" persisted Mrs. Caerlyon. "You're a pretty maid to cry because a man comes courting ye," she went on, more jocularly. "I am thinking Susanna Edwards would give him a different welcome."

"Then let her!" Winnie cried, wildly. "Oh; mamma, don't you know that I cannot bear him like—like that? I had rather die any day. I shall die if you don't send him away, and let me alone! He does not care one pin for me; he wants me only to make a servant of me—and I'd rather stay here and work for you and the children. Oh, mother, do send him away!" she wailed, clasping her hands tightly on her step-mother's arm.

The overthrow of her pet project vexed Mrs. Caerlyon very considerably—it had vexed her many a time these four months past, since Winifred had been summarily dismissed from Madam's service, although, to do her justice, Madam had written rather apologetically respecting her sudden decision to visit her relations in Kent, sending Captain Tredennick's fatal present to its owner along with that short, satin-paper, crested, perfumed note; but it had been a dismissal, and a pointedly abrupt one, after all, and hapless Winnie had met the brunt of a storm of anger, surprise, cross-questioning, taunts, and suspicion worse than aught else—suspicion, even from her father, although John Caerlyon had been born and bred a gentleman, and might have shrunk from branding his daughter's stainless brow with the imputation of levity of conduct (he would not admit that there was more of irritable fatherly anxiety than anything else in the harsh words that insulted the poor child's maidenly pride)—suspicion gathered from the gabble of serpent-tongued gossipers, and from the cowardly innuendoes of the base-spirited fellow who sought to humble and crush the

spirit of the woman whom he had chosen for his future wife. But all their persecution, threats, insulting advice, and prying surveillance never for one moment made that lonely, friendless, sad-hearted girl untrue to herself—untrue to her heart's passionate devotion. She never once took refuge in the usual feminine cowardice of the asseveration, "What do I care for him? He is nothing to me!" The steadfast truth of her noble womanly nature never once leaned toward the denial of the accusation which rankled in the very depths of her innocent virgin soul. Her lips grew white and dry with agony, but they never uttered the lie, "I do not love him," when they flung the name of her "fine gentleman-lover," Tredennick of Tregarthen, at her, to try to overwhelm her with helpless confusion and shame.

From the tried shield of Winnie's brave spirit the darts fell powerless that would have stung a fierce, impatient spirit into desperation, or moulded a feebler, more selfish one to tearful, complaining obedience, when she was openly warned that she had better give no further occasion of offence to her family; that, her conduct having been faulty—or at least such that gossip could find fault with it, the two not being by any means a matter one and indivisible—she would do well to endeavour speedily to set it as well as herself right in the estimation of the Susanna Edwardses and "cousin Anna Marias" of the neighbourhood, and that it behooved her particularly to take care that her relatives sustained no loss in either pecuniary matters or credit on her account. A worthy young man, in his great magnanimity, was willing to marry her, and make her a respectable matron, with a decent home of her own—a house with a spare bed-room, and a best parlour with haircloth sofa!—that is, provided she showed herself sensible of his goodness, gratefully obedient and humble-minded enough to meet his gracious advances half way. In this manner she might to some extent atone for her former love of extravagant fine ladies, and for "running after" fine gentlemen, who gave her twenty-guinea presents.

"'Twas scandalous!" Mr. Pascoe delicately affirmed; but neither his magnanimity nor his indignation cowed or influenced Winifred. Beyond briefly informing him that she would much prefer being flung over Tregarthen Head, or down one of Tolgooth's mine-shafts, to spending her life with him, even if he were the Duke of Cornwall himself, she made no response to his advances.

So her step-mother had angrily seen day by day that her

scheme for lifting a double burden off the household expenses and the entire future provision of Sarah Matilda was falling to the ground. It had fallen altogether now—there was no use in contending with an obstinate girl any longer, Mrs. Caerlyon said in vexed decision; she was “worth her keep” too, decidedly, and there were more to be blamed in the matter than Winifred.

“I don’t wonder at the maid one bit,” she said, late that same evening, giving Mr. Pascoe a final “piece of her mind.” “I never saw a young man keeping company with a girl in such a fashion. ’Tisn’t any wonder she can’t abear the sight of ye! Ye never asked her to go out for a bit of day’s pleasuring, and spent your money free as another young man would, or offered her as much as a yard of ribbon for a present! Girls can’t bear a man that’s mean when he’s courting—and that’s just the truth of it, Thomas!”

Mr. Pascoe was eating his supper, and particularly enjoying cold mutton “pasty,” bread-and-cheese, and hot gin-and-water; he restrained his anger until he had emptied the tumbler, and finished the last of the “pasty” crust, and then he arose and wiped his fingers with a darkly determined air.

“I’m mean, am I, ’Lezabeth?” he said, threateningly. “Do ’e tell me that I’m mean? I’m mean, am I—because I don’t go to fling my wages away, buying finery and stuff o’ nonsense to please a girl that don’t know when she’s well off? I might have the more to spend on your child for all my meanness, ’Lezabeth—it might be better for your Sarah Matilda if I was mean, though I wasn’t mean enough to refuse to give her the best my wages could afford, and do for her as ef she was my own—an ’e go telling of a man that he’s mean!”

“I said girls don’t like a man to be mean about money when he’s paying ’em attentions, Thomas,” corrected Mrs. Caerlyon, more conciliatingly.

“Well, then, I tell ’e,” said Mr. Pascoe—that worthy young man’s spirit being roused to a pitch of desperation between the insult to his unparalleled generosity, as he considered it, and the threatened attack on the “wages” he loved to hoard up so economically in the county bank—“I tell ’e that some one else can buy ribbons and silks for ’eer daughter, for I won’t—nor have nothen more to say to her neither—an’ so I tell ’e! An’ I told ’e afore that I’d have nothen to say to a maid that I have no great opinion of!

Winiford can get ribbons and silks where she got other things, and I'll not have no more to say to her!"

This awful threat, Mr. Pascoe doubted not, would have the satisfactory effect of making his cousin apologise, assure him of her continued determination to coerce Winifred into proper behaviour, admire him for his prudence and his deposit in the county bank, and humbly coax him into more generous promises of patronage on behalf of Sarah Matilda.

But Mrs. Caerlyon's spirit was thoroughly roused too; she began to consider that it was better, after all, to have Winifred's efficient services for herself; and at the bottom of her heart was a little lurking pity for her patient step-daughter's trouble, and a faint lurking hope that something might come of it, better even than Thomas Pascoe's generosity.

"She'll not have any more to say to ye—so ye needn't take much credit to yourself in that way, Thomas," said "cousin 'Lezabeth," scathingly; "and, since that's the way ye speak of her, I'd be sorry she did. I've no doubt the maid will find as good a friend, and better a sweetheart than you, whoever he'll be."

"Ah—Tredennick o' Tregarthen," sneered Mr. Pascoe, driving his hands nearly through his coat-pockets in his jealous rage.

"Well," said "cousin 'Lezabeth," keeping the "whip-hand" with calm superiority still, "what of it, Thomas? Tredennick o' Tregarthen might look lower than John Caerlyon's daughter. A lieutenant in the Royal Navy is as good as the captain of a merchantman, any day, Thomas Pascoe; and I am not very sure, Thomas Pascoe, that any of Lieutenant Caerlyon's daughters need go a-begging for husbands—nor I am not very sure, Thomas Pascoe," continued his offended relative with frightful iteration, as her temper rose higher, "that Winifred Caerlyon could not marry as good as a mine-purser any day—and so I tell ye!"

Mr. Thomas Pascoe thought of his house with the spare bed-room and best parlour with haircloth sofa, of his deposit-account at the bank and his generous intentions regarding Sarah Matilda, and could scarcely believe his senses. But "cousin 'Lezabeth" thoroughly looked as if she meant what she said; and when she went into Winifred's room before retiring to rest, and saw the weary look on the thin, white, sleeping face, and the dark wet eyelashes—even in her dreams the girl was oppressed with sadness—she would have spoken the "piece of her mind" over again if need be.

"The maid looks," said she with some troubled anxiety—"the maid looks as if her heart were breaking!"

CHAPTER XI.

"Aunt Vivian, I always considered you to be a person possessed of excellent taste."

"Indeed, Mildred love—have you had any reason to change your opinion?"

Miss Tredennick rose slowly, and with deliberate grace, from the velvet sofa on which she had been reclining, walked over to the mirror and arranged a crushed braid of her dark rich chestnut hair with greater effect before she replied.

"Rather. I understood that that little companion of yours was quite a pretty, interesting young creature."

"Did I say so, Mildred?" Madam Vivian asked, turning round from the dressing-table where Miss Trewhella was meekly and silently arranging her mistress's beautiful silvery hair and lace head-dress.

"You implied so," responded Miss Tredennick, carelessly—Madam never awed *her*, or made her nervous; "I understood that she was a clever, lady-like, intelligent, pretty girl. She did not seem to me to be anything but a common, poor country girl, like a servant."

"She was looking terribly poor and shabby to-day, Madam," interposed Miss Trewhella, with a simper; "Miss Mild—Miss Tredennick was quite surprised."

"I never said that she was pretty—never thought so," Madam said, coldly; "but she was my companion, who sat at my table, Mildred; therefore it was impossible that she could be a servant."

"Oh, then it was you who gave me the impression of her being clever, and attractive, and showy, and all the rest of it," said Mildred Tredennick, turning to Trewhella, and repeating, to the lady's-maid's consternation, with placid unconcern, what she hoped "the young lady" had listened to as a confidential communication. "I imagined her," added Madam Vivian's niece, "to be quite a peculiar, bewitching-looking girl—a clever, actress-like, intriguing young woman."

"Oh, Miss Mildr—Miss Tredennick! I beg your pardon—I never——" began Miss Trewhella, breathlessly.

"Trewhella!" cried her mistress, with a haughty turn of her head.

"A clever, actress-like, intriguing young woman," repeated Miss Tredennick, "who inveigled my cousin, Captain Tredennick, into admiring her excessively."

"What have you been saying to Miss Tredennick?" demanded Madam, with an imperious flash of her cold, brilliant eyes on the unlucky abigail, who betook herself to her usual protection of tears and sniffs in an affecting manner.

"I never said anything to—to—Miss Mildred, Ma—Ma—dam—never; only that the Captain admired Miss Winnie's hair—he said it was so lo—long—I'm sure 'twasn't anything so—so—particular to look at. I dare say he was making fun when he praised it."

"You have no right to suppose anything of the kind," said her mistress, sharply; "Winnie Caerlyon has the most beautiful hair I ever saw."

"And did cousin Stephen admire her?" persisted Mildred, with a proud, lazy smile, looking from her aunt to the injured Miss Trewhella, to whom the capricious young lady had taken a haughty dislike.

"Indeed he did," said Madam, with an admirable air of frankness and candour. "He told me that he thought her such a nice, modest, sensible little creature and pretty too, he said. I laughed so at him! But sailors are very gallant, and have an enthusiastic admiration for the smallest particle of female beauty, you know, Mildred."

"I always thought cousin Stephen particularly gallant," rejoined Mildred betaking herself to the sofa again; "a good-natured old fellow he always was, and bought a pony for me when I was a little girl, but he never seemed to notice pretty girls or ugly girls, except to tell me once that I should have made a much better boy than I did a girl."

"Stephen has not seen you since you were in the school-room," said Madam, with a peculiar smile. "I have no doubt but that you will find him less insensible now in the matter of handsome faces and plain ones."

Mildred listened in silence, her brows elevated, and her haughty chiselled lips turning in a sarcastic smile.

"Oh, is that it?" she returned, with a provoking air of *nonchalance*. "Well, I also am less insensible in the matter of handsome faces and plain ones, *chere tante*, and have my own ideal views on the subject."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Madam, quickly, glancing with a cer-

tain involuntary apprehension at handsome, self-willed Mildred Tredennick, who, by her imperious temper and inflexible will, and in later years by those brilliant unabashed eyes of hers and her proud beauty, had ruled, monarch of all she surveyed, from her earliest infant days, when vexed nurses pronounced her "a child that no one could manage," to the hour when her last governess said in despair that "Miss Tredennick would do just as she pleased" about music or drawing lessons.

Miss Tredennick did as she pleased about most things; and there were some unpleasant foreshadowings in the hearts of her prudent relatives that Miss Tredennick would continue to do as she pleased in a manner that might prove very unsatisfactory to them. In fact, this visit to the seclusion of Roseworthy and consignment to the guardianship of her careful, clever, aristocratic aunt—not quite palatable to the independent young lady—was a preventive measure agreed upon in a secret council of the prudent relatives aforesaid—Miss Tredennick's peevish, fussy, pompous father, and her handsome, vain, easy-going mother, and a stiff, sensible, worldly cousin, and graceful, gracious aunt Vivian, with a will nearly as strong as her own, and a diplomatic ability that would have done credit to an ambassador. There was nothing to be apprehended—oh, nothing, of course! Only Mildred was so odd, and had such strong opinions and pronounced feelings for a girl of eighteen!

"Ridiculous, you know!" said the easy-going mother.

"Shocking—provoking! I've a good mind to—to—just to——" broke out the peevish father.

"Bad style for a young lady," observed Madam Vivian placidly, with a quiet smile.

It was nothing serious of course! The idea was absurd! But those boy-and-girl attachments sometimes hung on, and occasioned awkwardness and unpleasantness. There was some boy-and-girl nonsense between Mildred and young Gardiner; there was no denying it—the sensible cousin had noticed it, the easy-going mother had noticed it, Madam Vivian had noticed it.

"There must be no attempt at anger or expostulation, Madam," counselled the peevish father, who was for trying the time-honoured expedient with wilful damsels of "locking her up in her own room."

"You want her to run off with Albert Gardiner the next dark night," warned Madam, coolly.

"He—he wouldn't dare!" spluttered the peevish father.

"Perhaps not," said Madam, smiling, "but Mildred would. She'd make him run away with her if she chose."

So Madam counselled, and they waited, until bright-eyed fair-haired Bertie Gardiner went away with his regiment—the most winsome youngster that ever carried a flag. And then Madam took self-willed Mildred away, with the understanding from the secret council that she was to be introduced to society, made accomplished and elegant, taught the value of her own beauty and fortune, and kept under Madam's supervision until she had safely disposed of her in marriage.

Astute, politic Madam Vivian had her own views in the arrangement, which the shorter-sighted members of the council did not perceive.

"So that's it, is it?" repeated Miss Trewhella to herself, copying Miss Tredennick's clear imperious accents—as she fondly hoped, very accurately—as she folded up sundry articles of Miss Tredennick's wardrobe, and put that negligent young lady's apartment "to rights" for the fourth time that day. "I wondered what Madam was going to trouble herself with a young lady for—one as proud and obstinate as herself too—and why she wouldn't have Winnie Caerlyon any more. 'Miss Tredennick will be sufficient company for me,' says she. I wish her joy of her management of Miss Tredennick; she's met her match now, sure enough. I wonder what'll he think?" pursued Miss Trewhella, disentangling the hooks of a velvet bodice from a heap of lace collars, and picking a gray Parisian kid glove out of the meshes of a Cluny lace-covered parasol. "Admire her, I suppose. She is grand and stylish-looking, I'll allow; and my! doesn't she know it! Why shouldn't she be grand and stylish-looking?" continued the waiting-woman, plaintively, holding up a lace-trimmed cambric wrapper. "The money she spends! Fifty pounds this last fortnight on that box of things from Paris, and sovereigns here and there!"

Miss Trewhella turned over the contents of glove-boxes and dressing cases, strewing the toilet-table with a medley of ribbons, jewels, perfumes, fans, gloves, and loose silver, thrown there by Mildred Tredennick's careless, royally lavish, indifferent hands; tried on some gold bracelets and pearl hair-pins, and sighed as she looked in the glass and thought of the unkindness of Fortune in not giving her eight hundred a year in her own right, and thus enabling her to look as grand and distinguished a lady as Mildred Tredennick.

"She's not stingy either, I'll allow," she admitted; "that blue silk of mine wasn't a bad present. He might do a great deal worse—she'll make a grand, fashionable, stylish wife for Tredennick of Tregarthen."

She paused a minute to admire a beautiful pale-yellow linen summer costume, with malachite and gold buttons, and tittered a little to herself.

"Poor Winnie Caerlyon!" she said, with an intense amount of smiling pity. "She has a great chance against Mildred Tredennick to be sure!"

CHAPTER XII.

The first snow of the new year had fallen, and lay as a pure, soft shroud over the bare fields and uplands, feathering with flaky whiteness all the black, leafless branches of the wintry woods. Softly and lightly it had fallen on the dark, iron-bound roads, frozen through long days and weeks of bitter cold and dull leaden skies; but enough lay even on that bleak high road by Tregarthen Head to mark where footsteps had newly passed before Winnie Caerlyon, and to leave the traces behind of her own quick, light footfalls.

The red gold of the western sunlight shone in level rays across the snowy landscape, the calm wintry afternoon was waning fast, and the quick, light footfalls of the little figure hurrying homewards were weary enough, returning from an errand of some miles' distance. It made the way longer to go up the long lane of Mennacarthen and take in the angle of the Tolgooth mine-road, and the snow lay deep between the high hedges of the narrow by-road; yet the hurrying little figure chose that way, and the quick steps grew slower and slower, until they paused altogether; and in the waning sunlight, amidst the drifted snow, Winnie Caerlyon crept beneath the dark shadow of the great overgrown masses of holly and laurel that clustered behind the moss-covered pillars of the Tregarthen gates.

She had a fancy for taking this long, lonely, roundabout Mennacarthen Lane in her way, whenever it was possible; she had a fancy for standing for a few minutes in the gloomy shadow of the great, shining, evergreen branches; she had a fancy for looking at that shut-up, silent, ruinous old mansion across the neglected lawn.

It was to gratify these foolish little fancies that she had hurried through the chill red sunlight and the crisp, drifted snow; and, in the pleasure of the gratification, she felt neither the cold of the snow nor the frosty afternoon air as she stood looking, with a curious interest in her eyes, at that silent house and ground—one unspotted sheet of dazzling snow, save where the shadowed marking of a double line of footsteps dotted the winding avenue.

Everything about the dreary old place possessed an interest for this foolish, lonely little maid, peering wistfully in. It was one of Winnie Caerlyon's greatest enjoyments, this silent flitting up Mennacarthen Lane, and looking in at the Tregarthen gates. The number of the shuttered windows had an interest for her; the old time-defaced statues and silent, weed-grown pond and fountain were pleasant to her eyes; the coral-jewelled holly-trees were more beautiful than the rest of their species; nay, the snow looked whiter and lovelier, gleaming in the red sunlight across the lawn and avenue, than elsewhere. She always went home happier after having had her look at Tregarthen; it was like hearing of him whose face was ever before her, like being in his presence for a few moments, the poor little maid's fond soul whispered to itself—her lips would not dare to put her thought into words—like hearing that he was living, and well, and happy far away over the sea—she heard no word of news in any other way—hearing of him, the hero of the idyl of her life.

Was it the prescience of a coming crisis of fate that kept Winnie Caerlyon lingering there, her little hands grasping the cold, frost-rimed iron bars, gazing with a dreamy smile at the old home of the Tredennicks, and pondering curiously whose could be the footsteps that had disturbed the thin white crust of frozen snow, while the last faint rosy smile of the winter sun drew farther away, and, leaving her in the cold gray evening light, shot his parting rays of level crimson radiance upon the boles of the old chestnut trees and gnarled oaks, and athwart the windings of the snow-clad avenue?

Brightly, radiantly, indeed, they shone; for to Winnie Caerlyon's dazzled gaze they seemed to illumine suddenly a mass of rich colour and glistening sheen like the hues of an exotic blossom or the plumage of a gorgeous bird, glowing on the amber and crimson hues, the festooned velvet robes of a woman's rich and beautiful apparel—gleaming on dainty lacquered boots, slim, close-fitting furred jacket, coquettish

velvet hat with its tuft of crimson and amber feathers stirring in the keen frosty breeze.

Fondly the pale red sun lingered and shimmered here and there about the tall swaying graceful form ere he sank to rest in his western ocean-bed, as if he sought to exhibit to the companion who walked beside her each hidden beauty that his admiring eyes had not yet discovered—the glow and flash of proud bright eyes, the peachy flush painting the pure, smooth cheek, the dainty ear, the firm, rounded chin, the golden-bronze of her masses of shining hair, the gleaming pearly teeth, the ripe, curving lips. Winifred Caerlyon did not miss one detail of that proud rare beauty in the very flush of its spring-time of youth, wealth, and high spirits, with the added charms of all that wealth, indulgence, and an imperial self-will could bestow to make it almost perfect.

The beautiful young lady of her reverential admiration—looking more beautiful than ever now—looking so evidently to him who walked beside her, with his admiring gaze fixed on the proud, lovely face, his smile serenely bright as he responded to hers, all his regard devoted to notice her slightest gesture, to catch the least word that fell from those rosy, scornful-curving lips, to re-echo the merry laughter of that clear, ringing voice. Oh, how beautiful—how lovable—how worthy of all honour, all regard, all dearest, highest affection must she be—young, lovely, beloved, gifted, well-born, wealthy, enviable Mildred Tredennick!

For one moment the passionate fire of a jealous despair leaped into the patient white face and the gray eyes of the girl standing without in the cold shadow and drifted snow looking in upon those two figures in the sunshine—stalwart, handsome, gallant, smiling Stephen Tredennick, and the fair imperial woman who was the object of his devoted lover-like attention—and then a darker shadow than that of the clustering laurels fell on her stricken brow, a numb cold weight seemed to fall on her trembling limbs, her hands relaxed their rigid hold of the cold iron bars, and through the cold frosty evening shades Winnie Caerlyon stole swiftly away.

With a dull heavy throbbing at her heart, a dull intangible pain quivering through her very soul, with compressed lips and hands clasped tightly over her breast, as one who tries to stifle the anguish of a mortal inward wound, she sped swiftly on in bewildered haste, scarce knowing whither that familiar road by Tregarthen Head was leading her, seeing nothing but those two figures in the sunlight, hearing nothing but the

echo of Mildred Tredennick's clear imperious tones. In her dizzy confusion of thought and vision, she almost imagined that she encountered them again face to face at the cross-road leading to Tolgooth mines, and shrank breathlessly aside from the pair that stood in converse together.

"My word, Miss Caerlyon, you're enough to give one a start, positively!" and in alarm, partly real and partly simulated, Miss Trewhella caught up her silk flounces in her lemon-coloured kid-gloved hands, and whirled around with a sharp little scream, as Winnie passed close beside her. "Now didn't she give you a start, Mr. Pascoe, too? I am sure I never saw or heard her coming!"

Acquainted as Winnie had hitherto been with the fashionable waiting-woman's resources in the way of effective toilettes, her information had evidently fallen far short of Miss Trewhella's ability in this direction; and she gazed confusedly at the splendid apparition, in order to make sure that her unsteady sight and fast-throbbing brain had not misled her as to the identity of the person attired in rich black silks and velvets, a gold chain, and the long-coveted silky jet-black Astrakhan furs.

Miss Trewhella's hair was crimped and curled, Miss Trewhella's complexion had the most extraordinary, charming blending of roses and lilies in lieu of its usual sallowness, and one lemon-gloved hand held a fragile lace *mouchoir*, most delicately perfumed with essence of wood-violet.

Winnie glanced from her to Mr. Pascoe, whose gracious countenance wore an awkward, detected expression.

"Evening, Winiford," said he, sulkily kicking the snow about with his boot.

"I did not rise out of the earth, or drop down from the sky," observed Winnie, coldly, in reply to Miss Trewhella's exclamation. "I saw you both standing here as I came over from the cliff road."

"Ah, yes," said Miss Trewhella, recovering herself with a genteel cough and smile, "we were talking, Miss Caerlyon—Mr. Pascoe and I."

The gentleman, hearing himself alluded to, looked up, more sulkily, if possible.

"I was speakin' a few words to Miss Trewhella," explained he, shortly and roughly, as if to deprive the conversation of any complimentary significance with which the lady strove to invest it; "she were a-tellin' me the news."

"Ah, yes," the lady responded, smiling sweetly; "I was

just saying to Mr. Pascoe that it is such a pleasant thing—so suitable—quite charming indeed—and one gets sadly lonely at Roseworthy; but now we have a pleasant prospect. Visitors, and so forth, you know, Miss Caerlyon, make a great change.”

“Oh, certainly,” said Winifred, nodding a slight adieu, and endeavouring to hurry on, but the lady of the silk flounces continued, in a brisker tone of animation—

“And indeed, Miss Caerlyon, you’re missed—you were always so quick with your hands, and so ready. As I often say to Mrs. Grose, ‘Dear me, if Miss Winnie was here, we should give her plenty to do.’ A wedding makes such work and bother and fuss!” and she tittered affectedly behind the lace handkerchief, glancing over it at Mr. Thomas Pascoe, as she had seen Madam Vivian do with her fan; but she made no further impression on that polite young man than to make him turn still more of his shoulder towards her, and kick the snow until it flecked her dainty skirts and wetted her boots.

“A wedding!” cried Winnie; and it seemed to her as if the chill, dark wintry afternoon closed around her in a sudden pall of night—as if the ocean surges roared and thundered in her ears.

“Yes,” said Miss Trewhella, with an air of excessive astonishment, belied by the saucy smile of her hard black eyes; and Mr. Pascoe lifted his foxy face from the contemplation of his thick mine-boots, and grinned in a malevolent manner, looking at Winifred with an elaborate pretence of indifference from beneath half-closed eyelids. “You’ve not heard, Miss Winnie?” continued the lady’s maid. “Really, I’m surprised! And stories like that do go so fast!”

“’Twas all over Tolgooth to-day, when he brought her through the works,” Mr. Pascoe put in, with the same disagreeable smile, eyeing a stone on the roadway as if he meant to ascertain its chemical proportions by sight. “A fine girl she is, too—shows the man has good taste.”

“Yes, indeed, Mr. Pascoe,” Miss Trewhella responded, having much recourse to fluttering of the lace handkerchief, and tittering behind it; “and you show your taste, too. Ha! ha! Really she’s a fine, tall, stylish young lady, as you say, Mr. Pascoe, that will do a man credit. Ha! ha! Really you’re too bad, Mr. Pascoe. But it’s a fact that gentlemen do seem to run after tall, fashionable-looking women;” and Miss Trewhella smiled slightly, drew herself up to her full,

tall height, rustled her fashionable silks and furs, and cast her eyes modestly down.

Darker, darker grew the chill wintry pall of a strange misty night, louder beat the surging tide of heart and brain, as Winnie Caerlyon stood still and calm, unmoved in torture, defeating all the malicious pleasure of her unworthy foes.

"You are alluding to Miss Tredennick, I suppose?" she said, her voice only a little harder and sharper than usual. "She is very handsome."

"Yes," observed Mr. Pascoe in reply, although she had neither addressed nor looked at him, smacking his lips as he spoke, and putting his hands in his pockets; "she's something worth lookin' at—a fine young woman!"

"And the Captain thinks exactly as you do, Mr. Pascoe," Miss Trewhella cried, giggling excessively. "It's queer you didn't hear of it, Miss Caerlyon; it's quite a charming match."

And Winifred Caerlyon replied, very calmly still, with even the quiver of a smile on the composed pale endurance of her face, "Yes, it is a very suitable match; Miss Tredennick is very handsome," bade them both good evening, and walked swiftly away.

Puzzled wrinkles came on Mr. Pascoe's narrow forehead.

"I shouldn't have thought that Miss Winnie would have liked to hear tell of your news, Miss Trewhella; but she doesn't seem to mind. She was always a queer, silent maid, without much to say for herself."

"Yes," said the waiting-woman, with disappointed enmity, "she pretends very well; but I've no doubt it's a pretty hard blow to her."

Hard enough to strike her to the earth—hard enough to strike her down there by the cold gray sea, where the drifted snow lay deep and white, veiling the black, cruel rocks in cold wraith-like softness; and gladly, with the gladness of morbid misery, would she have felt it enfold her prostrate form, her outstretched hands and rigid face with the chill, suffocating softness of a shroud. It seemed as if it would enwrap and soothe her into the cold, calm peace of Death's sound sleep; for she said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

And yet, if the stricken girl—the bright, sweet, tremulous dawning of whose young-womanhood had darkened in a moment into impenetrable night—the few pale, pure flowers of whose tender, sacredly loved and guarded hopes were crushed

into remorseless, disfigured ruin—had been asked what it was that she had lost and was mourning for with tearless eyes and bleeding heart, she could not, if she would, have made reply intelligent to other than Him who reads the heart, and to whom the anguished ejaculation, the wild, incoherent petition, the fragmentary prayer broken by convulsive trembling lips, are the clear translation of the hidden language of the soul, which no man born of men can read, and say with certainty, “This is the interpretation thereof.”

Was it a presumptuous, ambitious, unmaidenly love, and its speedy, well-merited punishment? Was it the wild, romantic folly of a passionate, half-educated girl, who flung away all the treasure of her young heart in exchange for a stranger’s transient liking, transient admiration, and transient caresses? Ah, poor little friendless, unloved girl, your pitying, guardian angel gave it a nobler name!

It had been the idyl—tender, imaginative—of a commonplace, work-a-day-world existence—the poem—the passionate, harmonious embodiment of the song, the melody of which stirred the enthusiastic girlish soul all through its slumbering life, it had been a beautiful erring worship, a fond false faith, a devoted mistaken creed. She had treasured it as a jewel of great price and beauty, to be looked at, cherished, delighted in, in those rare sweet hours of freedom when the shrewish step-mother, the seven noisy children, the small, over-crowded home, the hard work, the hard words, her father’s frowns, Thomas Pascoe’s detested presence, had all as it were passed away, and left her alone and peacefully happy by her young mother’s grave in Trewillian churchyard, or singing the plaintive lullaby for little Louie, when, from the little dormer-window looking seawards, there floated down on the wide expanse of rippling waters lost in the silver mists of the far horizon, the yearning breath of the tender words—

“Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the Western Sea.”

It had been something to think of in her meek maiden prayers, with an added voiceless petition—something to ponder in timid wonderment and sad tender yearning, when she knelt beside her mother’s grave in Trewillian churchyard, washed the simple slab, cut the waving grass, softly, carefully, with loving painstaking, as though she were fashioning a garment for the quiet sleeper’s wear, and kissed—“Winifred, the beloved wife of John Caerlyon.”

She wondered so if "mother" knew—knew him—him whom her child loved. She had whispered it so often down amongst the daisy roots and clustering mosses, she wondered did "mother" know—know that upon the lonely altar a fire was kindled, upon the snowy tablet a name was graven deep and dark, upon "the virgin page, pure and unwritten," was inscribed an undying story, in the empty heart-temple was niched an idol—a brave, beautiful, kind, beloved, worshipped idol, glorified by her fond womanly love, revered by her childish timid devotion. And now—now it was all over—the idyl profaned, the harmony turned to harshest discord, the worship annihilated—the god of her idolatry had fallen and crushed her!

Alas! she had never even the right to worship, to treasure sacredly, to believe in, to devote herself to that idol—simply no right. She was but intruding her ignorant thoughts, her ridiculous devotion, her absurd affection, where her presumptuous feet had led her to stray—where she, and her love and faith and constancy, were alike unexpected, unwelcome, contemptible. The idyl, the poem, the Paradise of lofty, tender thoughts and prayers had been all a dream—a long, bright morning dream—a dream the product of which was delirious agony of pain, desolation, and burning, mortified shame—the anguished shame which those equally proud and pure-minded alone can know.

She was awake now, to dream her sweet dream no more. Awake!—not even the soft snow's deadly shrouding could lull the pain to sleep. Awake! for the waves of the cold gray sea rang a ceaseless dirge, and she must arise and gather up the crushed, ruined remnants of the shattered treasure of her young life, wipe away her tears, and bury it deep for ever out of the sight of those who would mock her woe.

"I suppose I cannot die," she said, wildly, looking up to heaven in her tearless misery; "I shall live on and on as I have done for years and years. But oh," the girl cried, assailed with the devilish whispering temptation that ever lurks in the dark, mantling folds of despair, "I am not yet twenty-one, and life is such a dreadful thing!"

Beckoning arms from the tossing waves seemed to be outstretched to her, the deep gurgling waters amidst the rocks rolled in a soothing murmur, the ripples rushed towards her and slipped softly back into their ocean bed as if wooing her young feet, so bruised and weary from the pathway of life,

to follow them. She knew nothing of heathen doctrines of the right to die and the sinlessness of the suicide's act; she was only a poor, simple-minded, half heart-broken little girl; and a wilder prayer of supplication followed the ejaculatory one of despair. In the helpless simplicity of her Christianity, she turned to Heaven for relief.

"Heaven help me—pity me!" sobbed Winnie, upstretching her thin white arms, as if seeking the clasp of a friendly hand; and, gazing upward, she saw that the evening star had arisen, and was looking down upon her from the dark evening sky. Down into the gulf of her despair, like a pitying eternal eye, shone the slender silver ray. And the star-angel, God's messenger to his sorrowing child, lighting her gently on her homeward path, seemed to soothe her at once with assurance of succour and relief.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I can not quite understand, Mildred, about Miss Winnie Caerlyon—has aunt Vivian quarrelled with her?"

"Quarrelled! Aunt Vivian quarrelled with Miss Winnie Caerlyon! Profane mortal!" Mildred responded, her haughty smile resolving into a sunshine of mischievous fun. "Aunt Vivian quarrel with her poor little hired companion, amanuensis, or whatever other office she was honoured by being appointed to! Does Her Gracious Majesty box the ears of the royal pages when they fail in their duty?"

"Well, then, what is the cause of aunt's totally ignoring the poor little thing's existence?" asked Captain Tredennick, rather irritably. "I fancied that Madam regarded her more in the light of an adopted child than anything else, and now I discover that she never sees her, never mentions her name, and prevents it from being mentioned, as I fancied last night from her manner. Has Winnie Caerlyon done anything to offend her?"

"You had better ask her, cousin," Mildred replied, her face sparkling all over with satirical mirth. "Ask her where is Winnie Caerlyon—why was she banished from Roseworthy—and beg that she may be instantly recalled—do, Stephen—to oblige me!"

"Why are you laughing, Mildred?" he said, smiling in

spite of himself. "Is there any reason why I should not ask aunt Vivian about her little friend?"

"I think you had better apply to aunt Vivian herself if you want any information on the subject, cousin Stephen," Mildred returned, more quietly and coldly; "she might not think the affair one in which I could possibly, or with propriety, be interested, or with which I ought to be acquainted," and the sarcastic lips took an additional sharp curve as she spoke.

"'With propriety,' Mildred—about—about little Winnie Caerlyon!" Stephen Tredennick's very lips had grown pale, and he gasped out the words breathlessly in convulsive alarm.

"About little Winnie Caerlyon," Mildred repeated, her handsome face growing hard, and her bright eyes peering in their haughty gaze into her cousin's troubled changing face. "I am sorry to see that the news affects you so much, Captain Tredennick."

"Affects me!" Stephen Tredennick cried, his alarm and bewilderment growing stronger. "Why, Mildred, what is there to be sorry for? What is it about poor little Winnie Caerlyon?"

The cold haughty face grew colder, and Mildred Tredennick's eyes flashed in a sudden blaze of indignation.

"Captain Tredennick, I hate hypocrisy as I hate craftiness," she said; "it does not become one of our name to stoop so low as to touch either!" And, having given utterance to her sentiments, her imperial highness gathered her satin-lined morning-robos around her as if they had been in truth the regal purples, and swept out of Stephen Tredennick's offending presence, leaving him hurt, amazed, angry, and confused beyond measure.

Half an hour later her mood changed.

"I don't believe poor dear old Stephen is to blame one bit, in spite of all they may say," she muttered to herself, twitching her dress away from Miss Trewhella's solicitous touching and arranging, and marching off imperiously, fastening her silken sash and adjusting her lace collar as she went, in a highly independent manner. She fearlessly invaded her cousin's privacy in his study, where he sat before the fire in the dark dull afternoon, in a deep reverie of thought and tobacco smoke hazily intermingled.

"Cousin Stephen," she said abruptly, "I beg your pardon—I spoke rudely a while ago, but you annoyed me."

"I was not aware of having done so," rejoined Stephen

Tredennick, quietly and gravely. There was no one on earth who could manage Mildred Tredennick so easily, and exert such an influence over her, as her cousin Stephen; at least his aunt and hers—Madam Vivian—had constantly assured him of the fact. “But you annoyed and troubled me. Unkind insinuations and malicious hints ought to be as far beneath a Tredennick as hypocrisy and craftiness, Millie.”

“And I have not stooped to either, Stephen,” said Mildred, hotly; “but I thought that you were descending to an elaborate pretence of ignorance of something of which you were perfectly aware—at least, so they said.”

“Who said?” Stephen Tredennick demanded, laying down his pipe.

“Everybody—the world of Roseworthy and the parish of St. Awen.”

“What did they say, Mildred,” the Captain of the *Chittoor* asked, sternly, confronting his handsome, haughty cousin, haughtier than herself, looking down from his stalwart height on even her Juno-like stature; and imperious, self-possessed Mildred quailed ever so little, and faltered, with a girlish rising colour.

“They said that you admired Winnie Caerlyon, noticed her, walked out with her, paid her visits, liked and admired her, and paid her attention—you know, Stephen”—imperious Mildred faltered here—“and then——”

“Then what?” He struck his clenched hand with an involuntary force against the arm of his chair, and a storm overtaking the *Chittoor* on the wide ocean never brought so dark a cloud as then swept over his brow.

“They said that Winnie Caerlyon, poor little thing——” Mildred’s very temples had coloured now—her keen womanly pride and delicacy shrank from what must have seemed casting ridicule on another woman’s hopeless affection. That poor little miserable, pale-faced, shabby creature—why should she render her absurd and unworthy of respect in Stephen Tredennick’s eyes?

She glanced at the mirrored reflection of her own splendid form, in the glory of her blooming womanhood—at the silken sheen of her sweeping robes of royal blue—Mildred would have liked to wear purple velvet and ermine every day had it not been inconvenient—the massive gold comb and pins fastening the braids of her shining bronze-hued hair, her aristocratic jewelled hands, the satin fairness of which one hour’s hard work had never sullied—at all the queenly ele-

gance and grace which were so natural to her in the pride of her beauty, and she hesitated, with the unwillingness of a noble nature, to crush the weak, to mock the helpless, to slight a sister-woman because she was inferior in birth and station.

But Stephen Tredennick's face admitted of little hesitation, of no denial; beneath the magnetism of his clear, stern gaze, capricious Mildred had no power but obediently to reply:

"They said, Stephen—gossiping women—tattlers—those kind of people, you know," she went on, reluctantly,—“that Winnie——”

“What about Winnie?” Stephen Tredennick reiterated.

The childish name brought back in a flood of recollection the announcement of the little dark dripping figure in the lighted entry—the pale-faced child with the beautiful tresses of hair and the passionate womanly eyes—the shivering little woman whom he had escorted home through the wild March morning—the gentle girl by whose side he had sat on that sunny afternoon, listening to her sweet voice, as it mingled with the plashing of the waves—the patient, dear little creature, busy in the tidy kitchen, with her white apron and her big knife, cutting bread-and-butter.

Stephen Tredennick had often laughed since, calling to mind what a large knife and great pile of bread were there, and how slight and small was the deft little housewife—poor dear little Winnie, who had blushed beneath his gaze as he had never seen a woman blush before or since, whom he had taken into his heart, although he did not know it, whose pure lips he had kissed, and had felt ever since as if he dared never sully his own by a coarse word or a lighter caress, for their dear maidenly sake.

Winnie! Poor dear little pale-faced, quaint, simple-hearted Winnie—fiery, proud, passionate little woman—patient, dutiful, loving little maiden—what had the serpent tongues of gossips and scandal-mongers to lay to her charge—that innocent child with the wistful face and dark pathetic eyes, like a sea-spirit exiled from the beauty of her ocean home to earth's dreary drudgery? What had they to say to her? What did they dare to say? And Stephen Tredennick's stout heart grew still in the breathless waiting for his cousin's reply.

“What do they say about Winnie?” he repeated, hoarsely.

And Mildred Tredennick looked straight into his eyes—

angrily almost—for in her loyal womanliness she dreaded to see a sneer or self-satisfied smile there—and answered, bringing out the sharp bare truth of the assertion with a stern reproachful directness—

“That Winnie Caerlyon loves you.”

There was dead silence for a minute or two in the warm fire-lit room, for the gray shades of evening were falling fast over the snow-covered landscape. The smile that Mildred feared she did not see, although Stephen Tredennick’s face was lit up with a sudden flush and glow not due to the flickering radiance of the ruddy fire.

He took up his pipe with a steady hand, and sat down quietly again in the easy-chair; but Mildred did not hear the low heavy sigh of relief breathed by lips that quivered with sudden surprised emotion—nor did she perceive how his steady fingers had closed like a vise on the carvings of his meerschaum bowl and stem.

“Who said so, Mildred?”

He spoke so quietly, without an ejaculation of wonderment or disbelief, that Mildred’s curiosity aroused afresh her usual sarcastic, mirthful temper.

“Everybody, I tell you, Stephen,” she answered with a solemn shake of her head, closely watching her cousin’s somewhat inscrutable expression, and endeavoring to decipher it. “It is true, then, I suppose?” she went on, determined to tease him into admission or denial of the charge made against him. “Alas! false man, you have been regarding Tolgooth Bay as ‘All in the Downs’ where

the fleet was moored,
The streamers waving in the wind,

and poor little ‘Black-eyed Susan’ coming aboard singing—

‘O, where shall I my true love find?’

I am afraid it is all perfectly true, Captain Tredennick; and I never thought it would be my fate to see my hitherto highly-esteemed relative, who gravely reprov’d my delinquencies when I was young, and gravely admonished me as to the way in which I should go when I grew old, branded as a gay sea-rover by the highly respectable and scandal-loving inhabitants of the parish of St. Awen!”

“You need not talk such utter nonsense if you must jest,” said Stephen Tredennick, shortly.

There was not another man on earth who would have dared

to address that silken-robed, beautiful young woman in such a manner; but Stephen Tredennick always spoke as he felt to his cousin Mildred, and Mildred liked him as she liked none other on earth—save one. That one she loved—and Mildred Tredennick's love was a feeling very different from liking.

"It is not utter nonsense by any means, but particularly good sense, as you may find out," Mildred returned, jestingly still, but with a certain weight of meaning in her tones.

"And I thought you cared more for me," Captain Tredennick remarked, quietly and reproachfully, "than to allow vulgar gossip, in your hearing, to tamper with my name—not to mention the poor innocent little girl's—in that absurd and improbable manner."

"You tampered with it yourself before I ever heard the girl's name mentioned, or entered the cloistered seclusion of Roseworthy," retorted Mildred, sharply. One could wager with far greater certainty on the event of a bright, mild, sunshiny spring morning than on Miss Tredennick's mood for half an hour together.

The meerschaum was roughly pushed aside now.

"I," he said, the veins in his temples standing out darkly in relief—"I, Mildred! How, pray?"

"Through that fur jacket, I believe," Mildred responded, briefly.

Her cousin looked both excited and seriously disturbed and angry. She was a little afraid of provoking him much further; but the temptation to tease was irresistible with the tyrannical young lady—besides, after all, what could this poor little Winnie Caerlyon be to him?

"That fur jacket, concerning which I have heard such sensational accounts—why did you give it to her, Stephen?"

"The—fur—jacket," Stephen Tredennick repeated, in the slow utterance of mingled astonishment and indignation—"why did I give it to her? Because I chose to do so, and had the money in my pocket, I suppose."

"Very likely," Mildred replied. She was enjoying herself excessively—reciting in full to the very person most concerned the real cause which her aunt would have absolutely ignored and denied—of Madam's decision to rid herself of her poor little companion. Madam Vivian would not on any account have allowed Stephen Tredennick to discover that she had had the slightest apprehension with regard to poor Winnie Caerlyon's dangerous attractiveness.

Mildred had, of course, discovered this, along with others of her astute aunt's secret purposes and desires, as a bold, true, single-hearted nature will often discover the craftiest policy of a world-hampered brain at a single effort—she had a score on her own account likewise to pay off, and dutifully delighted in the thought of Madam's discomfiture. "Very likely," she repeated, laughing, "but I have heard of fatal gifts before now, Captain Tredennick. Dejanira's poisoned garment may have been pretty enough—doubtless as pretty as that beautiful sealskin jacket I have heard so much of—but you know what Dejanira's gift did for poor Hercules."

Between the terrible allusion to "poisoned garments," the sarcastic blame implied in his cousin's manner, and the attack upon his mythological memory, Stephen Tredennick felt quite overwhelmed.

"Why, Mildred, what harm was it? Did I—was it wrong?" he stammered. "I thought I might give a young lady—a girl of her age—a present—a little gift for a keepsake. It is not unusual, I think? Was it wrong? What harm was it, Millie? I did not think there could be any harm indeed!"

In his earnestness he stood clasping his cousin's fair jewelled hands, while Mildred's handsome face grew radiant with girlish fun, both on account of "poor old Stephen's uneasiness," and at the sudden belief that there was a deeper feeling than mere annoyance prompting his earnestness and excitement which her clever teasing had brought to light.

The red glow of the firelight revealed them standing so together—Mildred's bright, upturned face gleaming with smiles, Stephen's full of earnest questioning—revealed them so plainly that a watcher outside in the chill wintry gloaming of the dark, frozen shrubbery could notice even the pattern of the fragile white lace collar and sleeves which adorned Mildred Tredennick's rich dark silk dress, the brilliant cluster of golden toys swaying at her watchchain, the restless flash of the starry rings on her long, thin white fingers.

The firelit room, with those soft, ample curtains of maroon damask lying on the warm dark carpet—the subdued glitter of dark polished woods, and lines and spots of bright gilding glimmering from floor to ceiling—that dark cased wall, with its close-packed rows of books—the light, warmth, comfort, happiness, and the beauty of beautiful Mildred Tredennick—these were the accessories of the picture whose central figure she had alone come to look upon—that little dark-robed watcher in the cold and snow outside—to look her last upon.

She crept nearer and nearer for that long last farewell look—so near that had Captain Tredennick not been looking into his cousin's eyes, he must have met the gaze of those deep, dark, yearning ones outside in the evening gloom.

"Heaven bless her—Stephen Tredennick's wife!" whispered the pale, quivering lips; and then the dark evergreens and frozen shrubs rustled softly, parted and closed, and the lone little watcher was gone.

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"I am very sorry, Stephen; I should not have annoyed you by repeating this spiteful gossip," Mildred said, penitently, at the close of their prolonged *tete-a-tete* in the study—Mildred and Stephen were rather fond of *tete-a-tete* interviews and *tete-a-tete* rambles, Madam Vivian noticed, with much stately satisfaction—"and I promise you that, as far as I am concerned, there shall be no further ground for people's unkind remarks about your poor little Winnie Caerlyon."

"My poor little Winnie Caerlyon?" Stephen Tredennick said, raising his brows in a frown, whilst in the eyes beneath a curious smile was shining.

"Well, my poor little Winnie Caerlyon, then," returned Mildred, coldly. "She shall be my friend, and I shall request Madam Vivian, our worthy and grievously-mistaken relative, to permit Miss Caerlyon's visits here as my friend. But I believe I must make you my ambassador in the first instance, Captain Tredennick; it would be less formal and more friendly; besides, to tell the truth, I am half afraid of encountering that terrible step-mother, and should not wish to do so unless you object to the office. In case it should be too disagreeable and troublesome an undertaking for you, I will defer my invitation until I can pay a visit in person."

Her sparkling eyes shot glances of barbed satire and malice at her cousin, who, after a struggle to look coolly indifferent or indignant, failed utterly, and got up a violent fit of coughing instead, which perhaps accounted for the flushed confusion of his face.

"Nonsense, Mildred—I will go," he said, quickly; "not this evening though—it is too late now, I think."

"Rather," returned Mildred, laconically—"unless you want me to make my appearance in half an hour at the dinner-table alone, and, when my cousin is inquired for, tell Madam that he is gone after my Winnie Caerlyon!"

"Mildred, how can you be so ridiculous?" her cousin cried, laughing excessively, in a rather uncalled-for manner

indeed. But, as he turned to leave the room to dress for dinner, he put his arms round Mildred in a brotherly caress. "Millie," he said, earnestly, "you are a good girl—a good girl with a true kind heart, my dear. Whoever thinks you have not, misjudges you sorely; and I only hope," he went on, more earnestly and tenderly, "that no one will ever possess the love of that true heart who shall not be in all respects worthy of it."

"He is worthy," Mildred cried, passionately, her eyes and cheeks aflame in an instant in proud assurance—"you know he is, Stephen!"

"Bertie Gardiner?" her cousin half queried; with a rather pitying smile, haughty Mildred fancied. "He is a brave, handsome, high-spirited lad, I know; but, oh, Millie, my dear, he is very young, he is very far away, and constancy is not one of the virtues of youth under temptation."

The imperious forbidding gesture of her quick upraised hand stopped him suddenly.

"Temptation," she said, the proud tears flooding her brilliant eyes—"temptation to be false to me, Stephen? Why do you speak so," she demanded in haughty rebuke, "when you know that we love each other—that we mean to live for each other—that no one could tempt us to forsake each other," poor Mildred cried, in her proud devotion to her young lover—"when you know that nothing could separate us—Bertie and me—nothing but death!"

"Nothing but death," her cousin repeated, mechanically, and he softly stroked the fair white hand lying in his own, with a certain sense of sadness thrilling him from the proud defiance of the declaration of her fond, impetuous, wayward love—"nothing but death—I believe it, Millie!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"I must not be too late," he said to himself, as he hastened his steps down the winding descent of the road at the farther side of Tregarthen Head—"I wish I could have gone to deliver Mildred's message yesterday evening—I must not be too late now."

He quickened his steps again—the Coastguard station on the rising cliff beyond was very near now—he would not lose a minute more than he could help.

"Heaven bless Mildred! What a kind, generous nature she has!" he went on thinking, pleasantly. "What a brave, true, high-spirited, beautiful wife she will be in the years to come—a proud, noble-minded, generous, loving mother, whom her children will naturally turn to in reverence and admiration! How kindly she spoke of poor little Winnie Caerlyon! She will be a real friend to her, I am sure, quick-tempered and haughty as she is—as haughty as my old grandfather, 'Proud Tredennick,' as people used to call him. She is warm-hearted and true to the core—somewhat similar in character, yet full of dissimilarity, to my poor little Winnie herself."

It had a pleasant sound, this last phrase, to Stephen Tredennick's ear, and he repeated it again ere he angrily ruminated on another topic.

"How dare they gossip about her! How dare they couple my name with hers—poor innocent child! Because I ventured to bestow on her a few friendly words and a friendly gift! If I heard them, they should stow their words faster down their throats than they could utter them!" he said, wrathfully. "And aunt Vivian is most blamable of all! She gave the gossiping rumours stability by her unkindly treatment. As if the child had done any wrong—thought any wrong! All are unjust, unkind, tyrannical towards her—my poor little Winnie!"

He had almost reached the Coastguard station now, and his feelings had quite reached an altitude of indignation and chivalric resolve which would have dismayed Madam Vivian's very soul within her, as the result of her own injudiciousness, could she but have known it; but—happily for her peace of mind—she knew nothing further than the fact that her much-indulged, imperious niece had made the abrupt and capricious request that she might be allowed to invite Miss Caerlyon to spend the evening at Roseworthy, to which request Madam, in much surprise and outward-seeming graciousness, gave her assent.

Outside the whitewashed porch Captain Tredennick paused for a moment, in the hope that the busy little housekeeper herself might dart out on an errand, and save him from abruptly confronting the high-tempered step-mother.

"She is cutting the bread-and-butter for the children's supper with her big apron and her big knife, I dare say," he muttered, laughingly; "or minding the baby that she regrets is so quiet."

He listened to the voices that he could faintly hear through the closed doors and windows—listened for that clear gentle one he remembered so well; but it was not to be heard.

“I wish Mildred had come with me,” he said, uneasily; “Mildred could go in and bring Winnie back with her better than I can.”

He listened again, uneasily and longingly, before he knocked, and paused even when he was told to enter, listening in vain.

“How do you do, Mrs. Caerlyon?” he said, entering through the narrow passage to the meagrely-furnished, tidy little sitting-room, with a most fictitious assumption of easy cheerfulness. “I am the bearer of a note from my cousin, Mildred Tredennick, to your daughter, Miss Caerlyon. Is she at home?”

“Good evening, Cappun Tredennick,” Mrs. Caerlyon said, rising hastily, but confronting him with hostile stiffness and straightness, keeping the stocking she was darning pulled over her left hand, and the worsted needle in her right. “Do ye want to see Winiford?” she demanded.

“Yes, if you please,” he answered, trying to smile conciliatingly, and finding the effort to be a total failure in front of Mrs. Caerlyon’s petrifying stare. “Madam Vivian and my cousin Mildred want her to spend the evening with us, and I am deputed to bring her back with me. If you will be kind enough to tell her and allow her to come,” he concluded, sharply, Mrs. Caerlyon’s cold stare and gloomy face irritating him beyond measure in the anticipation of a curt refusal.

While he spoke, he glanced about anxiously for a sign of the little shabby black-straw hat, the thin gray plaid shawl, or haply that fatal sealskin jacket. Anxiously he longed for the sound of the light footfall, the soft patient voice. More anxiously than he could have believed possible—with a strange keen longing—he looked for the pale little face, the dark sad gray eyes, and the crowning tresses of silken brown hair. He had even begun to think how he would tease her for not having kept her promise, and would claim the keepsake he had requested during that cold walk in the wild March morning on their way from Roseworthy—if she would come with him—if she would but come!

“You can’t see her,” Mrs. Caerlyon said, shortly—“she’s not here.”

“Not here!” repeated Stephen Tredennick, feeling as if a cold wave of disappointment had chilled him to the heart.

"No," returned Mrs. Caerlyon, with a spiteful air of triumph in her gloomy face—"you'll never see her again, Cappun Tredennick. She's gone!"

"Gone!"

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Caerlyon, shortly, taking up her darning again—"Winifred Caerlyon is gone to America!"

CHAPTER XV.

Six months quickly sped away, and it was summer in the town of Winston, State of Massachusetts, United States of America—summer in Miss Sarah Whitney's front parlour, in Miss Sarah Whitney's own purchased dwelling-house, No. 30, East Street. Miss Whitney had just "washed up" the breakfast-things, locked up the buffet, and now stood surveying with some disfavour a large bouquet of white roses, wild sweet geranium, and drooping maple leaves which her niece—Miss Winifred Caerlyon—was tastefully arranging in a green china vase.

"You'll mess the room and break my green jar that I've had these thirty years!" cried Miss Whitney, with a frown. "Where did you get those flowers?"

"Out of the English cemetery, aunt Sarah," replied the gentle voice of the young relative—"there's such a quantity of honey-scented geranium growing there, and a great bush of white roses in the corner by the old wall."

"Hum—queer notion to go gatherin' flowers out of a churchyard to bring into a body's sitting-room!" returned Miss Whitney, in a dissatisfied tone, sitting down to her mending basket. "Is that an English notion, Winifred? If it is," she added, putting on her spectacles, "you'd ha' better left it behind you."

"No, I never saw any one do it," Winifred replied, gently as ever. The low, sweet, patient voice sounded lower, softer, perhaps sadder than of yore—"like the twittering of a lonely bird," Miss Whitney averred shortly. "But the white roses looked so fresh and beautiful, aunt Sarah, that I thought it would be no harm to pluck a few—I love white flowers so much."

"What took you into that old cemetery at all?" queried Miss Whitney. "You're for ever going in there. Is it be-

cause there happened to be English bones laid there fifty years ago that you have such a fancy for sitting among graves and head-stones?"

"Perhaps that is one reason, aunt Sarah," answered Winifred, truthfully; "but the chief reason is that there is one corner in it so like Trewillian churchyard at home, with the ivy creeping over the stones, and tufts of pink daisies, and one tall elm tree, that I could almost declare it was my mother's grave that lay in the sunny angle; and I feel as if I were actually back in Cornwall again when I sit there and hear the sea down at Saunders's Point."

Miss Whitney felt a little softened at the allusion to the fair young niece she was fond of eight-and-twenty years before; but she would not show it "for the world."

"You're homesick for Tolgooth Bay, and your step-mother, and her pack of children, I suppose, miss," she remarked, snipping away at the patching of a kitchen towel—Miss Whitney never let "rubbishing fancy-work" enter her house—"one would think that a decent quiet home would content you after that!"

"Oh, aunt Sarah," cried Winifred, lifting a pained white face, "you know that I am contented and very grateful for it!"

"Then you oughtn't to mope!" retorted Miss Whitney, sharply. "I suppose the house is too quiet for you, or you want girls to chatter with. You may go into other houses, then, for you won't have any chattering in here, Winifred Caerlyon! I'll have no fussing and dressing and talking about beaux and parties and fal-lals under my roof!"

Six months before Winifred would have shrunk, pained, mortified, and displeased, at her old maiden grand-aunt's peevish accusations. She had learned better now. The patient meek girl had grown wiser through the teaching of her hidden sorrow.

"Give me those stockings to darn, auntie," she said, with a slight smile; "they are a great deal more in my way than finery and parties."

"Oh, girls'll be girls to the end of time," rejoined Miss Whitney; "and of course you've your notions about fine clothes and sweethearts and getting married, like all the rest."

Winifred laughed.

"Well, if I have, what is the use of my troubling my head about them, aunt Sarah?" she asked gaily. "You

know you wouldn't permit it, if I wanted ever so much to have fine clothes and sweethearts, and get married."

"Oh," Miss Whitney returned, grimly, "old as I am, I am neither so old nor so silly as to think that I could prevent you if you took the notion, any more than I could stop the grass from growing."

"Well, but I shall never take the notion; so you will be spared all trouble about me in that respect, at least, aunt Sarah."

"Why, pray?" demanded aunt Sarah, looking over her spectacles. "You'll get married when your time comes, though I dare say you've an idea in your head now that you won't have any one but some fine, tall, handsome fellow with curly hair and a straight nose—girls are always going on with that rubbish!"

Winifred smiled slightly, but made no reply; and Miss Whitney impatiently regarded the quiet attitude and the busy fingers for a few moments in silence.

Crotchety and eccentric as she was, there was one thing which provoked her into incessant suspicion and impatient curiosity—her young grand-niece's ungirlish quietness, docility, and reserved old-fashioned womanliness; though, had she been otherwise, Miss Whitney would have been merciless in rebuke and chiding.

"That's what he is, I suppose, Winifred?" she resumed, with a sour smile on her wrinkled face.

"Who?" she asked, with a start.

"That fine gentleman you left at home in Cornwall. You needn't deny it. I know well enough: That's what you're always thinking about, and going into the churchyard for, and crying over graves. Your step-mother hinted enough to me."

"Aunt Sarah, you are wrong, and you are wronging me," said Winifred, quietly, but trembling. "There is nothing in Cornwall which I have any right to love outside of my father's house, except my mother's grave. There is no one that cares for me, unless my father and the children do; and my step-mother knows that," added Winifred, with a touch of bitterness. "No one ever wanted or asked to marry me, except that man I told you of the first night that you came, aunt Sarah—you remember?"

"Ay, I remember well enough, I guess," responded Miss Whitney, snipping away fast and angrily—"I remember seeing you come in with your white face and swollen eyes and hoarse voice, more like a poor creature out of an infirmary,

or a nurse that had been tending patients for a year running, than a girl of twenty—my niece Winifred's child—and so I told your step-mother!"

"It was from no fault of my step-mother's, you know, as I told you, aunt Sarah," explained Winnie, sorrowfully pleading—"I had been very grieved and fretting—and—and nervous. It was so foolish of me, but I soon got over it, aunt," she added, with a faint little quiver of a smile. "Things were worrying me, and I was not very strong, and—and—oh, aunt Sarah dear," she cried, passionately, "you cannot tell what a relief it was to me when you said that night that you were come to take me away! I had been feeling that I must go away somewhere or I should die, and I was praying to God to help me as I walked home; and when I came in, and saw my strange aunt sitting by the fire, and heard her say that she wished me to go away with her at once, as she was returning to America, I felt as if she was an angel sent from heaven to me!"

The tears were falling on her work, and with a very dissatisfied grumble Miss Whitney went on with her patching.

"And then you brought me thousands of miles to live with you, aunt Sarah," presently resumed Winnie, more lightly; "and I was so glad to come, though I had to leave father and the poor children. I shall never leave you, auntie, unless you bid me—never marry anybody, or let anybody marry me—never!"

Strangely enough, Miss Whitney looked anything but pleased at this soothing assurance.

"I don't see why you shouldn't," she muttered under her breath.

She glanced at the wavy brown hair glistening in the sunlight, the pure pale face, the slender graceful form in its simple robing of soft transparent black, with a spray of white blossoms fastened at the waist.

"I don't see why you should be different from others," the old lady remarked aloud, with an air and a tone of gruff indifference, belied by the keen satisfaction and secret pride which glimmered in that keen, long look through the spectacles. "You're not made a drudge and a slave of here, as your father's wife made o' you."

"Ah, dear aunt Sarah," Winnie pleaded again, "it could not be helped! I don't know what mamma will do now—and there's poor little Louie!"

"She'll do without you when she can't have you, I sup-

pose," returned Miss Whitney, crustily. "I don't see what business she had to make my sister's daughter's child her 'help!'"

"This stocking is darned now, aunt Sarah," said Winnie, striving for the soft answer that turneth away wrath; "shall I go and make the pot-pie?"

"No, you sha'n't," answered Miss Whitney; "Hannah'll do it a sight better than you, I guess. Go over to Miss Green, and ask her if she can come over here this afternoon—I want to speak to her."

"Miss Green, the music-teacher, aunt?" said Winnie, a little puzzled.

"Yes," replied Miss Whitney, with grim humour looking at her shrivelled knotty hands; "don't you know that I'm going to learn to play polkas?"

Miss Whitney seemed determined, on that brilliant, balmy summer day, to keep her pale young grand-niece abroad in the pleasant tree-shaded streets and flower-scented lanes, for late in the afternoon she was despatched again on an errand to a distant part of the quiet, straggling town.

"And you needn't run back like a hare, panting for breath!" cautioned the grim, kindly old woman, who, in downright truth, dearly loved and tried to indulge, in an old-fashioned, grave, undemonstrative fashion, the girl-niece she had taken from her dreary English home, as she never yet had loved or indulged any one or anything in her life before; only she did not choose that Winifred should perceive this. It was very injurious to children, according to the strict, grim Puritanism of Miss Whitney's doctrine, that they should know themselves to be objects of tender, watchful love, heeding their every wish and fancy. "And that black hat of yours is too heavy for this hot weather," Miss Whitney remarked in disapproval, as if she merely disliked the idea of a sunstroke for her niece, and did not think that a new hat would be a source of some pleasure to a young girl. "You'd better go into Fletcher's when you're out, and get a white one—plain, Winifred, with a bit of black-lace or something simple. There's three dollars for you—will that be enough?"

"Oh, aunt, thank you—it will be plenty!" said Winnie, gratefully. "I'll get a nice one—one that you will be sure to like."

And when Winnie was safely gone, and the gate closed

behind her, two tears dimmed the glasses of Miss Sarah Whitney's formidable spectacles.

"It's not many a niece, or daughter either," she muttered, "that would think first of all of getting what I'd 'be sure to like.' She's been Elizabeth Anne Caerlyon's daughter long enough," continued the old lady, beginning to count over a roll of bank-bills from a plethoric pocket-book, "and a hard-worked neglected poor slave of a child too! But she's mine now," said Miss Whitney, laying down a comfortable-looking pile of ten-dollar bills, "and I guess she shall have just as good a time as other folks' daughters have in a free country!"

* * * * *

It was after sunset when Winifred returned, and, entering the parlour slowly with a paper parcel in her hand, found Miss Green *vis-a-vis* with her aunt at the tea-table, spread with the best damask cloth and napkins, the red and white china, fresh corn bread, flaky biscuits, and raspberry jam in one of Miss Whitney's old treasured Dresden dishes.

"Well, Miss Caerlyon, here I am again, you see; your aunt has been kind enough to insist on my staying," said Miss Green, a clever, lively, agreeable "school-madam" of some five-and-thirty years of age.

"I am going to learn my polkas, you see, Winifred," put in aunt Sarah, looking very humorous and cheery from some cause or other.

Miss Green was smiling, and looking very humorous too; and, following the glances of their eyes, Winifred stared hard at the new occupant of the recess beyond the old-fashioned fireplace.

"Where—where did that dear little piano come from?" she cried, dropping the paper bag and rushing over to open the dark shining lid. "Whose is it? Oh, aunt!"

"Mine, of course," said Miss Whitney, gruffly; "didn't I tell you that I was going to learn polkas and operas, and everything that can be learned?"

"Oh, aunt," entreated Winnie, speaking in all good faith in her eager longing, "won't you let me learn them too?"

For the first time for a considerable number of years Miss Sarah Whitney burst into a fit of laughter that shook her from head to foot.

"I—I will—oh, never fear, I will, Winifred!" she said, losing her breath and coughing violently. "But you and

Miss Green'll have—hard work—to keep ahead of me, I guess—I'll learn the polkas and operas so fast!"

She poured out the tea, and heaped the preserved fruit and golden cream on her niece's plate.

"Come to your tea, child, and presently we'll look at your hat; afterwards we'll see how you'll get on with the music."

"Oh, aunt, is it for me to play on?" asked Winifred, falteringly.

"I guess it is," said Miss Whitney, shortly—"unless you leave it to me to play all those fine things I'm so clever at."

"Did you buy it this evening, aunt Sarah?" she questioned, unbelievably.

"Indeed I didn't—Miss Green did, though. Sit down, Winifred, the tea's getting cold."

"I never saw thanks more gracefully given," said Miss Green afterwards to her friends and acquaintances. "Miss Caerlyon got up, went over to the old lady, sitting as stiff as a post, and looking as hard and grim as a stone image. 'Aunt, you are so kind, so thoughtful—you have given me such pleasure, dear aunt, and I will try to repay it,' she said, and put her pretty pale little face down on the old lady's breast, with her two arms around her neck. How she ventured to do it, I don't know. I didn't think a girl living would venture to kiss Miss Sarah Whitney like that. It's just because the loving little soul is fond of her stern old aunt; and I will say that she's the sweetest little thing I ever met, whether she's English or not."

"It's a pretty hat, my dear," said Miss Green presently, surveying Winnie's new acquisition with a critical eye; "but what did you get that plain black silk scarf on it for? That's mourning—half-mourning, you know—that snow-white, crape-like material, and that folded, soft black lustring with fringed ends—quite mourning, my dear—Miss Simmons wore just that in half-black for her brother."

"If aunt doesn't object, I should prefer it to any colours, or bows, or flowers," said Winnie, timidly, her colour coming and going.

"I think it looks very neat and nice," declared Miss Whitney; "but what do you want to wear mourning for, child?"

Winnie paused, the flush deepening on her cheeks, and then she spoke the truth in her own simple way.

"There will be a funeral to-morrow morning in the English cemetery—an English stranger's funeral; and I should like to go, if you will not forbid me. I feel as if I must go,

aunt dear," said Winnie, sinking beside her aunt's chair, and laying her face on one of the grim, hard, carved arms, "and must wear a little token of mourning for the poor young English stranger that they are going to bury in that sunny corner, like he place where my mother is buried in Trewillian churchyard."

"Land sakes, I never heard such a queer girl as you are!" ejaculated Miss Whitney. "Who on earth is it? And what do you want to go to the funeral for?"

"Oh, it's the poor young fellow that was hurt in the railway accident a month ago, I guess," said Miss Green, wiping her eyes. "It was very sad, Miss Whitney; he was a young English officer from Canada, down on leave to New York, and the poor fellow was so badly hurt that time when the cars ran off the rails—a month ago, you remember—that he had to be just carried into Farmer Healy's, at Place Vale, and has been lying there ever since. I heard that he was dead yesterday morning. It's very sad, poor young fellow!"

"He was a stranger in a strange land, dear aunt Sarah," Winifred pleaded—"no mother or sister to nurse him, or weep for him now that he is dead; and I thought that perhaps some one that loved him in England would be glad if I followed him to the grave, and planted a few flowers there."

She was weeping now from the depths of her tender emotion, and, although she did not know it, there were no dry eyes with those who had heard her speak.

"Won't you play something, Miss Caerlyon, my dear?" said the school-mistress, gently, some time afterwards.

And Winifred, feeling as if it were a consecration of her aunt's kind gift, played softly and solemnly, while her tears fell for the young soldier's memory, "The Dead March in Saul."

CHAPTER XVI.

It was the last ball of the season—this grand exclusive reception at Lady Hollingsley's—and all Belgravia and Tyburnia, from the Dan to the Beersheeba of the fashionable world, was astir with eagerness to obtain cards of invitation; for the last ball of the season at Hollingsley House was not as other balls—rather was it viewed as the reserved piece of music to adorn the wind-up of a *soiree musicale*, the grand chorus of a

festival, the final dazzling burst of splendour of a pyrotechnic exhibition, the triumphal march, with bands playing, colours flying, arms burnished, uniforms gleaming and glowing, of a conquering army quitting a well-won field.

For the pleasure of an evening in Lady Hollingsley's airy, elegant, brilliantly-lighted rooms, amidst the wearers of coronets, the great, the gifted, the nobles by rank and by nature—for Lady Hollingsley gave as much honour to one as to the other—for the chances of boudoir *tete-a-tetes*, of semi-royal quadrilles, of a supper over which laudatory newspaper paragraphs exhausted their stock of French encomiums—for honours and glories and delights like these, and more, chaperons and *debutantes*, wives and mothers, young men and maidens, old men and staid maidens, intrigued and hoped, and were disappointed or rejoiced, according as Louisa, Lady Hollingsley, selected to pass over or delighted to honour.

It was the last ball of the season, but it had not quite arrived yet. It was fixed for the twenty-eighth of July, and guests were not expected to arrive before ten p. m. It was now a little more than ten a. m., and the guests expectant had scarcely emerged from their bed chambers, if, indeed, the weary *debutantes* and wearier chaperons before alluded to had risen from their pillows at all.

"I am sure, my love," said one weary chaperon, loosely robed in mauve silk-embroidered cachemire, seated in an easy chair, and languidly sipping chocolate, "I never expected for a moment to see you until luncheon-time, after that wearisome musical affair of last night."

"Why did you go then?" coolly demanded the ungrateful *debutante*. "I am sure it afforded no particular delight to me to hear those wretched fugues, and syncopated passages, and solos, and shrieking violins, and moaning violoncellos for three hours."

"Nor to me, Miss Tredennick!" retorted the chaperon, sharply. "I went simply for the reason that brought me up from my quiet country home to undergo the fatigue and turmoil of a London season."

Mildred Tredennick was silent. She was weary of the subject at issue between her clever, indomitable, self-willed, handsome aunt and herself—as weary as she was of the London season.

"Three more years nearly before I shall be twenty-one," she thought, wearily; "I am only eighteen and seven months.

What is the use of having money and being handsome? I might as well be a slave to aunt Vivian."

The thought was perhaps a little unjust to "aunt Vivian," for it was certain that, if Mildred Tredennick was a slave to that lady's worldly projects and purposes, she was an extremely rebellious and troublesome one.

"I declare," Madam often exclaimed, from the very depths of her vexed soul, to her nephew, Stephen Tredennick, "if Mildred Tredennick marries a coronet, I shall deserve it much more than she!"

And Stephen Tredennick as often advised, "Then don't trouble yourself to marry her to a coronet," but little hoping that it would be of the slightest avail to restrain Madam Vivian from the course of worldly policy, contriving, scheming, and match-making which she was so desperately pursuing for her troublesome ward.

Madam had almost totally despaired of the match she had first so fondly planned. Even if she could coax and flatter Mildred into wedding the cousin whom she loved as a brother, she could not persuade Stephen Tredennick to marry the beautiful, haughty, high-spirited girl on whom his quiet, tender affections could never rest in perfect peace as his wife and comforter—the dear, gentle, soft-handed, sweet-voiced, loving woman he sometimes dreamily pictured as his wife, if such he might ever possess—some one to sit by his side at the fire while he smoked or read the paper, some one to write him long loving letters when he was away, some one to long and pray for each safe return, to make the dreary old house at Tregarthen a happy, sunny home, alive with children's voices, playing in the light of a gentle mother's smile.

Imperial, self-willed Mildred Tredennick was to him as a beautiful sister, of whom he was proud, and for whom he was very anxious. Those restless, reckless, brilliant ones are so often a source of pain and anxiety to the quiet hearts that love them! Besides, Stephen Tredennick knew that passionate, strong-willed, fiery Mildred's girlish heart was given away, never, by a nature like hers, to be quite recalled again.

"I wish aunt Vivian knew all that Millie has told me," he said, regretfully; "she might spare herself the trouble of trying to make her marry a coronet—for she is one to give her hand with her heart, in spite of a world arrayed against her. Poor Millie!"

"Poor Millie" did not look, on this morning of Lady Hollingsley's ball, as if she quite deserved the cousinly pity.

She was decidedly in one of her most arrogant and sarcastic moods; and both the chaperon and the chaperon's maid—much-enduring Miss Trewhella—had to suffer in consequence.

"What an intolerable nuisance it is!" she said, crossly, as Miss Trewhella and Mildred's own maid divested her of her morning-robe, and fitted on a silken corsage, which had just been altered beneath Madam Vivian's inspection. "When are you going to leave town, aunt?"

"Perhaps you would like to leave this morning, Miss Trendennick?" Madam retorted, with the cold gleam of a stormy smile, evidencing plainly that she was losing temper. "It doesn't matter about Lady Hollingsley's ball."

"Oh, but it does though," objected Mildred, with a slight laugh, "for I have extorted a solemn promise from Stephen to be there, and to dance at least three times with me; he cares as much for the affair as I do, but we mean to try to enjoy ourselves."

There was little hope in this for Madam's first project, which she was almost content to abandon, considering the unattainable grapes to be sour in comparison with the lusciously rich ones bending at hand. Mildred might never be her favourite nephew's wife, but it would be something after all to be aunt by marriage to a most complaisant peer of the realm, who declared to intimate friends that he admired the aunt almost as much as the niece.

"I hope you will enjoy yourself, my dear," said Madam, suavely; "a *debutante* of eighteen, one of the belles of the season, at a ball at Hollingsley House, wearing one of Worth's dresses, ought to enjoy herself—not to allude to such things," Madam added, more suavely, brightly smiling—"such additions to the pleasures of a splendid festive gathering as devoted partners who wear coronets."

Mildred frowned at herself in the mirror—she was fond of standing before mirrors, this girl who was wealthy, handsome, and not nineteen.

"I wonder how many devoted partners wearing coronets I should have if I had had small-pox," she rejoined, slightly.

"If it had disfigured you, not one," Madam affirmed, coolly; "titled and untitled would leave you to vegetate as a wall-flower then, Mildred. Prize your beauty while it lasts, my dear."

Mildred was in one of her worst moods; her nerves and temper were somewhat upset and unstrung by three months

of the fashionable slavery which her nature, yet fresh and pure and healthy, revolted from so constantly; and Madam Vivian's smooth worldliness jarred on angry Mildred very roughly.

"Why should I prize it, Madam?" she asked, sharply. "I don't want to be ugly, but I don't see any reason to set such a wonderful value on my beauty. It will last long enough, I dare say, and I don't see that it has done anything particular for me, or need do anything. I don't intend to sell it for money—I have enough of my own to satisfy me. I want my liberty," the young *debutante* cried, arrogantly—"my liberty to go where I please, and when I please, and be independent of every one, if I please! I should like to go up the Mediterranean, or the Nile, instead of basking in this hot, detestable, dusty town; I'd like to go wandering about over the world, to go to India with a regiment," continued Mildred, waxing reckless before her aunt's haughty eyes and cold smile—"go up to the hills, preside over Indian race-courses, ride out to a boar or a tiger hunt, and live in a bungalow!"

Madame Vivian with the utmost pleasure could have boxed her niece's ears with her own white hands, but she constrained herself with an effort, and, clever woman as she was, recovered her smiles and easy, graceful manner in a few moments.

"I am not quite sure about the boar and tiger hunting, Millie, dear," she said, with a light laugh; "but I think you may be able to realize your Nile and Mediterranean longings before another year."

"Yes," Mildred muttered, angrily, to herself, "in that odious Lord Mountrevor's yacht! That would just suit him and Madam both! They would drive me mad in six weeks—the clever intriguing of the one, and the inane platitudes of the other—a painted, padded fop!"

She was alone for a few minutes, while Madam superintended some millinery preparations in an adjoining apartment, and, wearily surveying the dingy houses, the rows of first-floor windows, the trim, flower-covered balconies, the white pavements, the dull, dusty decorousness of the dull, fashionable street, Mildred let her thoughts fly off as birds from a cage to the vista which her own wild, reckless words had conjured up—poor, beautiful, untamed, prisoned falcon as she was!

"Oh, how I should delight in it," she said, with a pas-

sionate gasp—"to be free, to be away from London, and fashionable people, and dusty streets, and crowded ball-rooms, and idiotic partners who wear coronets!"

The speech seemed rather an inconsistent one for a young lady who habitually wore Paris-made robes, and was particular about the shade of her parasol and gloves being in perfect unison. But Mildred Tredennick, loving beauty and beautiful things just for their own sake, and possessing an innate exquisite taste for colours and effects which could endure no outrage of its perception, always chose just as that perfect taste guided her, were the cost little or much. It generally was much; but then, as she said in her own girlish phraseology, she had "money enough;" and, moreover, Mildred Tredennick was charmingly inconsistent at all times.

"And how I should like to go to India, and ride at day-break—a long stretching gallop by the sea-shore, as Bertie told me he used to have!" And then the caged falcon drooped her proud head, and a dreary look clouded her bright eyes. "Bertie, my darling," Mildred whispered with a tender glow and soft flickering smile on her face that peer or coronet never could, never would bring there, "why don't you write to me? Bertie, my own dear love, three long months, and not a line! Oh, Bertie, what would I not give to be free to ramble about the world with you! How happy we should be!"

"You are an exceedingly extravagant girl, my dear," said Madam, re-entering the room; "but I must say that that dress, with those graduated shades of blue satin and *poult-desoie*, and that exquisite white Brussels lace, is simply perfection."

But exquisite dresses were no novelty to Miss Tredennick; and, besides, she felt weary and low-spirited to-day. She positively refused to "try on" the dress, saying that one annoyance of the kind was sufficient.

"Don't you feel well, Mildred?" Madam asked at length, with the air of one who was enduring martyrdom.

"No, I don't," replied Mildred, shortly.

"You had better lie down, and let Morton or Trewhella bathe your head with eau-de-cologne, and take a little red lavender," advised Madam, in the same tone.

"Nonsense, Madam," cried Miss Tredennick, almost rudely; "I never surrender myself helplessly into the hands of servants when I feel out of sorts, to be fussed about and nursed

like a sick lap-dog." And the curtained doorway fluttered and the door banged as Miss Tredennick swept out.

* * * * *

"And you have no conception, Stephen," Madam said, late that evening to her nephew, who had come to dine with them, and later still to escort them to Hollingsley House—"you have no conception how Mildred has tried me to-day! First about her dress, which she would not try on, though it requires some alteration, and then about Lord Mountrevor, who called at three o'clock and she would not see him! I can not tell what is the matter with the girl," concluded Madam, almost in despair. "I will not undertake her chaperonage during another season if she does not alter. I must say that she is not much comfort or society to me either."

At the moment Madam would not for her fortune three times over have welcomed her unmanageable ward as her quiet, affectionate, kind-hearted nephew's wife, and at the same moment, oddly enough, with her final words, her thoughts went with sudden quick regret to one who had been the most thoughtful, patient, gentle, obedient, and agreeable of young companions.

"Poor little Winnie!" she said to herself, with a sigh. "If Mildred were ten times as handsome and clever, she would never be one-half as amiable and lovable as that poor foolish little creature!"

"Blessings brighten as they take their flight." Winnie, departed to an unattainable distance, gone from all chance of exerting the wiles and charms which Madam's jealous suspicion dreaded, had become quite a treasure to be mourned over and a standard whereby to measure.

"If the silly petulant little thing had not rushed off to America in that absurd and ungrateful fashion, without even coming to bid me good-bye, I should have taken her back again, perhaps," Madam mused.

"Cousin Stephen," said Mildred, wearily, as she entered a few minutes afterwards, and they stood in one of the deep windows together, "you have no idea what a heavy, weary, dull, miserable day this has been. And, do you know, Stephen, strangely enough, I have been thinking of Winnie Caerlyon all the afternoon. I know she was a nice gentle little creature from what Madam says, and I am sure she was sensible and pleasant to talk with from what you say; and I have been wishing all the day that I had her to chat with me, and bathe my head, or help me to cry, or scold, or something

—I wouldn't let Morton hear me. Aunt Vivian has been in terrible dudgeon with me; and, as for that disagreeable, sly, crafty woman, her maid, I should like to see her come nursing me and bathing my head, as Madam proposed! I believe she poisoned Madam's mind against Winnie Caerlyon, and I told her so!"

"What did Madam say?" asked Stephen Tredennick, trying to restrain a smile.

"Oh, she inquired, in her grandiloquent way," replied Mildred, sarcastically, "what interest I could possibly take in a person of whom I knew nothing whatever. And I told her that cousin Stephen liked her, and that that was quite sufficient reason for me to take an interest in her."

"What did she say to that?" Captain Tredennick questioned again.

"Nothing," replied Mildred, with a careless shrug; "she knew that I should keep on saying more and more astounding things, so she was silent. Poor little Winnie! I think she was cruelly used, Stephen; and I meant to let every one know that such was my thought, only that she went away, unfortunately, in that sudden manner."

"Perhaps it was better for her, poor child," suggested Stephen Tredennick, rather gloomily; "she seemed to have a good many foes and very few friends."

And for a few minutes the last speaker's thoughts went after the exiled little maiden with regret, and vain longing for her presence.

CHAPTER XVII.

At half-past nine o'clock Stephen Tredennick returned from his hotel, and was ushered by smirking, curtseying Miss Trewhella at once into Madam's dressing-room, where he found his relative robed in black *moire antique*, point lace, crimson velvety roses, and point lappets on her silvery, abundant hair, and diamonds scintillating on her white plump hands, her round wrists, her neck, and from her dainty aristocratic ears, as if they were dewdrops fallen from the drooping roses in her hair. She was very magnificent, but she was in consternation—almost in tears.

"She won't go, Stephen!" Madam cried, breathless with alarm and excitement and excessive vexation. "There was

never any one more tried than I have been this day! I positively declare that Miss Tredennick shall return to her father and mother to-morrow, and let them send her to a strict school or convent, or wherever they like best—I wash my hands of her!”

“Why does she refuse?” Stephen Tredennick asked, in surprise and trouble.

“How can I tell?” Madam exclaimed, sharply, almost beside herself from vexation. “Because of one of her never-ending, abominably obstinate whims, I suppose!”

“Let me see her, aunt,” Captain Tredennick said, deprecatingly—“perhaps Millie is not well.”

“Perfectly well,” asserted Madam, with a stamp of her foot; whereat Miss Trewhella chuckled internally.

That worthy young woman was resolved to endure no rival in her mistress’s consideration, and strove, in her meek, enduring hypocrisy of affectionate devotion and her power of sly dealing, to aid in widening the breach between her mistress and her haughty niece by every means in her power, were it only by the finest point of a knife-like wedge. Miss Tredennick, who had been an object of fear to her from the first, and of jealous envy, had become latterly simply an object of spiteful hatred, since Miss Tredennick’s own maid was now the recipient of Miss Tredennick’s lavish presents.

“Perfectly well,” Madam repeated; “but, if you think you can talk that self-willed, unmanageable girl into reason, you are mistaken. You are at liberty to try.”

She dropped indignantly down on a seat, almost regardless of her superb *moire antique* and point lace.

“Trewhella, tell Morton that Captain Tredennick wishes to speak to her mistress.”

“Thank you,” said Stephen Tredennick, coldly, passing out before the obsequious handmaiden, “don’t trouble yourself: My-cousin will see me, I have no doubt.”

“Oh, sir,” objected Miss Trewhella, stopping the way with an alarmed curtsy and shake of the head, “you—you can’t, sir—really, sir! Miss Tredennick’s *tout ong dizabilly*, sir.”

Captain Tredennick put his strong hand on the woman’s arm, quietly put her aside, and knocked at Mildred’s dressing-room door. The young maid, a neat, pretty girl, with a frightened face and flurried manner, opened it instantly.

“She’s there, sir,” she whispered, in reply to his query, and, motioning him toward one side of the dimly-lighted room, she gladly escaped for a while from its precincts.

"Millie, my dear girl, are you not well? What is the matter?" The Captain groped his way to the shaded lamp, turned on a bright blaze of gas, lit the extinguished wax-candles at the mirror, and then he saw Mildred lying on the sofa, her face turned away and buried in the cushions—more as if she had flung herself there in pain or misery than for repose, with the voluminous folds of her dinner-dress lying on the carpet, her rich hair all disordered, and one hand convulsively clasped.

The room was filled with light and the beauty of rich, brilliant robes. Stephen Tredennick scarcely knew where to stand or sit or kneel for webs of costly lace-like frost-work, for trailing satin or tulle, for tiny white-satin shoes, for jewel-cases and bouquet-holders, and essence-bottles, and glove-boxes, and gorgeous Cashmere wrappers. Miss Tredennick let none of her eight hundred a year lie idly by.

"Millie dear, what is the matter? Won't you tell me?" he asked, coaxingly. "We are always allies, Millie—my dear cousin, what ails you?"

"Nothing, Stephen," said Mildred, sitting up; and then she burst into tears. "Nothing ails me. I am perfectly well, as Madam has just told me, in a rage; but I feel as if I would rather be put into a prison cell than go to this hateful ball! I suppose I am over-tired, or something. There is no use in Madam's forcing me to go. I can't dance, or speak, or do anything but sit down and cry; my heart seems like lead, Stephen—something must be going to happen to me."

Stephen Tredennick's kind broad brow darkened.

"Nothing is going to happen to you, my dear," he said, kindly; "it is just what you say yourself. You are over-tired, Millie dear; and I must say that it is a shame to force any young girl in this mill-round of staying up at night when she ought to be asleep, and sleeping when she ought to be up, as fresh as the flowers. Dress yourself, dear, for this last time, and I promise that you shall have no more ball-going this year. Hurry, Millie, dear; your aunt's quite ready."

"Oh, of course!" cried Mildred, bitterly. "If I were ready to drop down dead, and Madam had said that I should go somewhere, she would just go on with her toilette as calmly and carefully as usual, and come in ten minutes too soon, with the last button of her glove fastened, to know if I was ready."

"If you feel ill, my dear cousin, you shall not go," said Stephen Tredennick, decidedly.

"I am not in the least ill, I tell you, Stephen," Mildred reiterated, ringing her bell violently. "There, go away, and tell Madam not to suffer any more anguish of mind on account of my obstinacy. I shall go, and she may thank herself for whatever happens."

Her heavy eyes and pallid cheeks lit up with burning, angry determination, and Stephen Tredennick went away unwillingly.

"I am sure Mildred is not well, aunt," he said, as they sat awaiting her coming in the drawing-room—"she seems so feverish and nervous."

"Very!" returned Madam, sarcastically, adjusting the wide black velvet and splendid flashing diamond solitaire that adorned her smooth white bare neck above the point lace of her corsage. Widow of fifty-seven as she was, she showed as handsome a pair of shoulders, albeit a little less of them, as she did at twenty-seven. "Very, Stephen! That is, you mean to say, calling things by their right names, that she exhibits a great deal of spoiled-child impertinence and ill temper."

"I think both her temper and manner decidedly deteriorated since she came to town," said her nephew, decidedly. "Mildred was never ill-tempered or disagreeable before; and she certainly seems thoroughly unhappy and dispirited this evening."

"Unhappy and dispirited!" echoed Madam, scoffingly—"I dare say. It injures Miss Tredennick's health very considerably not to have her own will and way in everything. She informed me this morning that she wanted her liberty to go where she liked, and when she liked; and she has been sulking the livelong day because she hasn't this privilege, I suppose. Really Marion Tredennick is not to be congratulated on her method of training her eldest daughter.

"She looks ill, at all events, and has been crying bitterly," said poor Stephen, feeling himself to be, in a measure, between two fires—for Madam appeared to grow more irate.

"I have the prospect of a charming evening before me," she observed, stamping her tiny foot—"to play chaperon to an unwilling young lady, who has been sulking, and complaining of low spirits, and crying—to chaperon her in the rooms of Hollingsley House, before the best people in town!"

Perplexed and distressed, Stephen Tredennick began to wish earnestly, for his own sake as well as for that of others, that the last ball of the season was well over, when, to his

intense relief, he heard the rustling of silken robes descending the staircase, and presently Mildred entered. She was dressed in her splendid robes of shimmering blue satin, of varied shades of brightness, and clouded over with a delicate, frost-like, misty veiling of snowy lace, with clustering white roses in her rich chestnut hair, and white roses in her jewelled *bouquetiere*. The delicate hues and fresh pure brightness of her costume, like the cerulean tints and fleecy cloud-shadows of a morning sky, marvellously became the proud brilliant beauty, those flushed cheeks and bright dark eyes, those curving red lips and flashing white teeth, the wealth of ruddy golden-brown hair, the lissom, stately, beautifully moulded figure.

* * * * *

"So much for Miss Tredennick's low spirits and ill-health, Stephen, my dear!" said Madam, too satisfied and triumphant to retain much ill-humour.

They were sitting together, or rather Stephen Tredennick was graciously permitted to form one of his aunt's little court of admirers and supporters—half-a-dozen or so—who constantly loitered near vivacious, witty, clever, handsome Madam Vivian wherever she appeared during the season; and Madam, with a sarcastic smile, indicated Mildred's blue dress and white roses whirling around in a *valse a trois temps* with Lord Mountrevor, with a movement of her plumed white fan, encrusted with tiny spiculæ and stars of jet and silver, to represent "mourning."

"I am very glad to see it," Stephen Tredennick returned, earnestly, but with a lurking dissatisfaction still.

He had seen Mildred looking brighter, happier, handsomer, many a time than she looked that evening—a belle and beauty in her glistening azure satin and lace and white roses. He hated to see that hard arrogant smile on her fresh lips, that supercilious droop of those haughty white eyelids which was becoming so habitual. She looked fevered and restless, for all her beauty and gaiety. He hated to think of gay, high-spirited, proud, warm-hearted, beautiful young Mildred's being transformed into one of those cold, handsome, heartless, fashionable women whom Madam Vivian appeared to consider the perfection of high-bred womanhood. He hated to see Henry, Lord Mountrevor, with his arm around that girlish supple waist—a man he knew to be an effeminate dandy and a *roue* of the gracefully-immoral, elegantly-knavish type, with not brains enough to be a very

great or clever knave, but with inclination enough to be addicted to a great deal of knavery and immorality of a rose-water-perfumed, rose-colour-veiled quality, and with intelligence and ability enough to enable him to keep the outside of his own particular sepulchre fairly whited. There was not any great or particular wickedness in the polished nobleman, nor any particular good worth mentioning, save his intense and faithful admiration of Mildred Tredennick. But Stephen Tredennick hated to think of his beautiful young cousin's bartering herself for a share of that man's name, and being crowned with the glory of a coronet from his hand.

Perhaps she knew what was passing in the Captain's thoughts, from that calm, grave expressive face of his, and the anxious looks that followed her from his kind dark eyes. Certain it is that of the three dances she had promised him, Stephen got but one, and then Mildred went down to supper on Lord Mountrevor's arm. Afterwards her cousin caught but an occasional glimpse of the brilliant, excited face and tall lissom figure—in pauses of the dance, in momentary smiling encounters in the large, well-filled saloons, through the flower-laden branches of exotics and the misty perfumed air, amid the gleam and glow, and flash and glitter, with the soft, sweet, measured, ringing music throbbing in unison with every pulse of gladness in one's being, until the gray summer dawn crept through the curtained windows, and the rolling away of carriages with their occupants left the great saloons more sparsely filled, and bare spaces of floor here and there and deserted niches in corridors and boudoir showed the flotsam and jetsam of the ebbing tide—fallen faded flowers, scraps of ribbon and lace, long remnants of tulle, a dropped cobweb of a gauzy handkerchief, spangles and trinkets. The tide ebbed away faster with the first tremulous golden rays of the new day, and presently the last ball of the season was over.

"Thank goodness, it is over!" said Stephen Tredennick, with relief, as he followed his aunt and cousin, carefully escorted by Lord Mountrevor, to the waiting carriage, and saw the peer, as he pressed Mildred's hand, petition quite fascinatingly for a gift which she seemed scarcely willing to give, though it was but one drooping white rose from her fading bouquet. But he obtained it, nevertheless; and, as Mildred watched him bowing and smiling, with the soft white rose drooping in his hand as they drove away, her

cousin saw a quick, passionate revulsion of look and manner come over the girl as she took the rest of the flowers from the gold *bouquetiere*, and flung them far beyond on the street pavement from the carriage window.

Madam Vivian had fallen asleep, muffled up in a crimson downy-wadded *sortie du bal*, and there was none but Stephen Tredennick to see.

"Why did you do that, Mildred?" he asked, gravely, almost sternly.

The brilliance and glow and pride were fast fading from the girl's weary pale face. Her bright eyes filled with sudden tears at her cousin's question.

"I was sorry I gave him one," she said, with a contemptuous backward glance and gesture toward Hollingsley House. "They were Bertie's favourites. He gave me a cluster of them one evening, just before he went away. He liked white roses better than any other flowers—Bertie did."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The dew-drops were beading the long waving grass, and glittering tremblingly on the rustling ivy leaves, which shook off the translucent gems, in a passing breath of the sweet summer morning breeze, down upon the fresh, rosy-tinted faces of the little daisies beneath, scarce unclosed as yet to the warm smile of the sunlight. The blossoms of the dewy white roses stirred softly, too, and the perfumed liquid of their snowy chalices dropped on the thirsty leaves of the purple-flowered wild geranium, that clustered in shrub-like scented masses of downy leaves and lilac-starred petals.

But the birds were silent in the shadow of the elm-trees; chirp and song and fluttering gladness alike were hushed. The feathered occupants waited, watching in fear and surprise, to see the final issue of the strange invasion of that sunny, peaceful corner by the elm trees, where the white roses and purple geraniums had bloomed in wild luxuriance for so many years, where the dark clustering ivy twined and crept over the mossy wall, and the pink-tipped daisies starred the sod—the sunny, peaceful corner in the old English cemetery of the town of Winston, State of Massachusetts, United States of America.

Unwonted and strange the invasion appeared; for the peace and quiet of that little old out-of-the-way cemetery and its weed-grown, flower-grown graves was seldom disturbed by the arrival of another occupant for one of the many narrow homes in that silent land. More seldom still was one brought to the sunny corner beneath the elm trees—the stranger's corner—where the bones of a score of shipwrecked emigrants from English homes far over the sea had been lying more than forty years.

Yet was one coming now; for the new home—oh, so narrow, so dark, so cheerless—was prepared, and the pink-tinged daisies and tender dewy grasses, cut and shorn away, drooped and died, heralding the arrival of the new tenant to his home. Presently a group of dark-clothed men had gathered, and one, robed in white, with open book, solemnly gave possession to the new occupant of his six feet of earth in the God's-acre of that sunny old cemetery. Then the small group of men laid the stranger down in that strange home in a foreign land, with a few sighs and grave sad looks, but no tears, no sobs, no pallid bereaved faces; there were only a few grave, sober men—no women, save one, and she was weeping. The hour was early, the cemetery was distant from the town; no women were there, save this one, who was young and pale and fair, and wore fresh mourning tokens, and quietly wept behind her thick black veil.

She had a cluster of beautiful dewy white roses, buds, and half-blown blossoms in her hand; and, as the men prepared to lower the oak coffin, with its burnished plate flashing in the rays of the morning sun, down, down from the flowers and sunshine, the stirring blossoms, the glittering dew-drops, the breath of the sweet summer morning's life, into the dank, deep, silent place appointed, she pushed gently forward.

"If you please, sir, will you let me—if you please, sir?" she begged timidly of the quiet, gentlemanly young man before her.

"Certainly—I beg your pardon," he said, stepping back with alacrity, and glancing with quiet interest at the slender, girlish figure in the dark dress, and with the cluster of white fragrant flowers.

The oak coffin was at her feet as she moved into the vacated place, and, kneeling beside it, she laid the dewy branches of roses round the name-plate. She kept back one half-blown flower, and it was wet with the fast-falling tears

that were dropping on the coffin ere she could hide it beneath her veil.

Then the adjusted ropes were lowered, and the coffin and its white roses soon were lying down there where light and life and love could come no more until the Resurrection morning.

"A friend of yours, I suppose?" the gentleman asked, with much courteous sympathy.

"I never saw him—never knew anything about him until he was dead," answered Winifred Caerlyon; "but, oh, I am sure some one knows him and loves him far away in England, and I came for their sakes!"

Some one knew him and loved him of a surety—that handsome fair-haired lad, who lay beneath that coffin-lid in his lonely grave, with Winifred Caerlyon's white roses encircling his name—

ALBERT GARDINER.

AGED 22.

ENSIGN IN HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S 8—TH REGIMENT OF FOOT.

DIED JULY 29, 18—.

Just in the dawning that had closed the last ball of the season !

CHAPTER XIX.

As one that had passed away from their world for ever, yet keeping their memories of her fresh and living by messages of love, by words and deeds of thoughtful affection, with her gentle presence, her patient endurance, her cheerful laboriousness, so constantly and unavoidably missed, "sister Winnie," far away in North America, became to the younger members of the Caerlyon family a dreamy, mythical personage, to be invested with all manner of attributes and perfections, very lovable and desirable, and much to be respected, but mythical. Although she did send home those bank-bills to "mother" that put her in such a good temper for the whole day, and the picture-papers to Sarah Matilda and Tommy, still she was mythical. "Sister Winnie," who used to bake the bread, and wash their faces, and curl Sarah Matilda's hair, to be away there in that pink-bordered country

just where the edge of the atlas-map came, with the cold, blue-coloured Atlantic by its side—impossible!

It was understood on all hands that there never was anybody—never could be anybody—half so clever so accomplished, as that long-lost mythical “sister Winnie;” and, strangely enough, Winnie’s once harsh step-mother and task-mistress never discouraged this ideal by word or deed.

On the contrary, Sarah Matilda, now a smart, self-willed, high-tempered, pretty girl, blooming into “the maiden-blossoms of her teens,” grew disheartened sometimes with herself and her endeavours, in comparison with all the related achievements and perfections she was so often reproachfully reminded of as belonging solely to that banished elder sister. Did she forget a message, there was a running comment on the worthlessness of “heedless maids” accompanying the lamentation of regret for the “nice, quiet, careful ways” of the sister who never forgot—“no, not if she was sent for five-and-twenty things together!” (Mrs. Elizabeth Anne Caerlyon’s “nagging” powers had not diminished in the least.) Did incipient womanly vanity prompt Sarah Matilda to passionately desire fashionable hats and white feathers therein, and urge her mother to the extravagant purchase, she received scolding homilies without number relative to “your poor sister Winnie, who never asked an inch of cloth she could do without.”

Madam of Roseworthy, when she mentally compared her self-willed, proud, handsome niece disadvantageously with her poor little summarily-dismissed companion, was not alone in the remorseful rendering of justice to patient Winnie Caerlyon.

She had had time to recall the sterling memories of her gentleness, kindness, and long-suffering—she had had time to remember the sweet low voice that was heard no more, the sweet pale face that she could never see—she had had time to think of these things in seven years—of late years even more than at first.

And so came to pass the truth—strange and strangely flattering, as the meed awarded to her for the first time in her life, as the long-due reward freely and fully offered—that Winnie Caerlyon was sorely missed, was deeply regretted, though seven years of absence had made her memory like a dream of the dead and gone.

“What ages ago it seems since poor little Winnie Caerlyon used to run over every second evening to read to me

and play for me—poor little thing!” Madam Vivian remarked, late one cold dark evening in February.

She was sipping the favourite green tea from her favourite cup of pale buff and gold evening china, and with jewelled fingers, dimpled more deeply but less whitely fair than of yore, daintily crumbling—after her usual fashion—the morsels of cake; she sighed as she spoke, glancing across the table at her *vis-a-vis*.

“Trehwella reads to you, does she not,” Madam?” inquired the *vis-a-vis* carelessly.

“Trehwella!” said Madam, with a shrug. “Yes—sometimes. She has no notion of modulation or expression, poor woman! A *dernier ressort* when my eyes ache, I assure you, my dear. It is not much more pleasure to me to listen to her reading than it is to her to read. A woman of her class, at forty-five years of age, has long out-grown the time when love-stories and romances are interesting; still she fancies it keeps up her dignity.”

“Her dignity!” echoed the *vis-a-vis*, with a kind of leisurely scorn. “What have people of her class to do with dignity, I wonder? You pay her wages to make herself useful and agreeable to you, just as you used to pay Winnie Carlyon to make herself useful and agreeable; and when she ceased to do so you dismissed her, I believe.”

“I never dismissed her,” said Madam, with peevish protest—“that is, not finally, you know. I meant to take her back—I have said so dozens of times.”

“Oh, yes—I know,” returned Madam’s *vis-a-vis*, the leisurely scorn glimmering in a cold smile; “and, whilst you were deliberating about the possibility of forgiving her heinous offences, she fled out of the country. The little fool, she should have waited until you thought proper to remember her existence!”

“She should!” cried Madam, sharply, and it seemed defiantly, in the face of that haughty mocking smile. “She should have been more grateful and docile—I had been a good friend to Winnie for three years before, from the time her father came to Tolgooth. She should not have treated me so unkindly.”

There was a flush on Madam’s face and there were tears in her eyes, the brightness of which was a good deal dimmed; her brow grew lined, and the wrinkles in her fine skin deepened; and, as she sank back rather heavily in her cushioned

chair, it could be seen that handsome Madam Vivian was growing an old woman very fast.

"I never intended to forget or forsake her—I meant quite to adopt her in time," she resumed, complainingly. "I always treated her like a lady, and required my servants to do so too. Winnie treated me very ill, I think."

"Possibly," observed the other, in the same cool measured way; "there is no such thing as gratitude to be found, you know. I don't see why you should trouble yourself to remember a young person who was so forgetful of your extraordinary benefits. She was designing, and forgetful of her humble station, too, you recollect."

"I don't recollect anything of the kind!" Madam retorted, the cold measured voice, the barbed, mocking, polite assurances seeming to goad her. "I am well aware that there is no such thing as gratitude to be found—your ladyship has no need to remind me of it; but I don't believe poor little Winnie was anything worse than a foolish, simple-hearted child; and, if I had advised her in kindness and confidence, I believe there would have been an end of it. She was always a truthful, honourable little girl."

Madam had wiped away three or four angry tears while she spoke—seven years before her nerves would not have been so easily shaken. But neither tears nor anger seemed to ruffle the composed face and smile and voice of the "ladyship" she addressed.

"But there was another person in the case, I understood," she persisted, smilingly, lying back in her chair to face Madam more directly, and fanning herself slowly; "and there might not have been an end of it in the way you would have wished, Madam. It was much the better plan to dismiss her—send her packing, as housekeepers say. She is safely gone now—never to return."

Madam's eyes shot a quick flash of indignation, and her lips parted; but a second glance at the calm, haughty face, the mocking smile playing about the downcast eye-lids and sharply-cut lips, the indolent repose of the figure and the play of the fan, stopped the indignant reproof trembling on her lips. She turned her head away, and gazed unsteadily at the fire for a few moments; then she half turned round and addressed her companion with an attempt at composure and indifference that was rather a failure.

"Did you tell me that you had heard from Lord Henry this morning?"

"Yes," the lady replied, arching her eyebrows slightly, in a tone the perfection of indifference; "and, as you have reminded me of domestic relations, I had better look after Lord Henry's heir—though Jeanneton decidedly ignores any claims or directions of mine with reference to her spoiled pet."

There was a subdued gliding rustle as the heavy silken folds of a train of lustrous dark blue swept softly over the carpet, and the tall, imperially-moulded figure of the wearer passed out through the doorway, and Madam was left alone.

"Yes, gone—gone, never to return!" she muttered, half aloud, shaking her head; and the brilliant firelight shone on a very lined and sad old face.

Despite the silvery curls, the careful head-dress, the silks and laces and diamond rings—yes, even the dainty kid, rosetted, gold-buckled shoes as of yore—Madam Vivian looked an old, weary, sorrowful, lonely woman, as she sat there in the luxurious green drawing-room, in the restless glow and blaze of the firelight, and the steady, clear luminousness of her favourite wax-lights, listening to the steady roll and crash of the waves out by the Black Reef of Tregarthen Head, as she had done these many, many years alone.

"It is a lonely life," she went on, the weak tears rising that she scarcely cared to wipe away; "neither son, nor daughter, and scarcely a friend—alone in my old age! And I preferred *her* to Winnie—my poor little Winnie, she would have been as a child to me—I preferred *her* to Winnie!"

CHAPTER XX.

"I don't see that it's any use speaking to a maid like you at all! Why, 'e never thinks of a thing while a person's crossing the floor after telling of you! 'Tis quite a shame for a great girl of your age to be going about her work like a gaby that never saw a bit of bread properly made! To leave the sponge a-working in that sort of way!"

And Mrs. Caerlyon, rolling up her sleeves in vengeful haste, commenced making up the neglected dough as fast as possible, flouring herself considerably in the process, whilst the neglectful Sarah Matilda went sulkily about some other work.

"Now," her mother began afresh, punctuating her words by vigorous kneadings, "this is no less than four batches of bread you've been and spoilt, since I was fool enough to let 'e meddle with it. Four! I never knew your sister Winnie to spoil—no, not as much as a pasty—never, in her life! She had her wits about her when she went to work! I don't know what 'e mean to make of yourself if 'e grow up like that!"

"Ma!" interrupted Louie, looking up from a praiseworthy attempt at darning her stockings.

"Well, child?"

"When shall we hear from sister Winnie again, ma? It's a long time, ma, isn't it?"

"Long enough," returned Mrs. Caerlyon, shortly, but determined to finish Sarah Matilda's "nagging" in spite of the interruption. "But sister Winnie will write regularly, never fear; she was never one to forget her business. Every bit of it'll be heavy—every bit! Serve 'e right, Sarah, if you had to eat it all yourself—kept on it for a month!"

"Ma!"—the interruption came from another youngster, who was amusing himself with putting bits of coal, and occasionally the tips of his fingers, between the bars of the kitchen grate—"Ma—I say ma—didn't sister Winnie promise me something in her next letter? Didn't she, ma?"

"Yes—she did. What are 'e at, driving your fingers into the fire for, Johnnie, like that? I never saw the like. Take your hands out of the coals this minute, and go wash them—you dirty, dirty boy!"

"Now," said Johnnie, with a grimace of triumph at his younger sister, and quite unmoved at the maternal objurgation—"now, Miss—sister Winnie did! Now! Ma says it too."

"Don't care," returned Louie, stoutly, darning away; but Johnnie's triumph, or the longing desire for "something" in a letter for herself, or the fact of having run the needle into her finger, broke down her resolution. "Ma," she began afresh in the whimpering tone she had never quite got rid of from babyhood—"ma, won't sister Winnie send me something, too? I wish sister Winnie would come back."

"She'll never come back any more," said Johnnie, with a nod of assurance. "Ma—she won't, will she, ma? Sister Winnie won't come back ever again, ma, will she?"

"I don't know—I am sure I wish she would," replied Mrs. Caerlyon, tartly, for Sarah Matilda's benefit again; "I

should have a person with a head on their shoulders, and a pair of willing hands to help me, if she did. Bless me! what on earth are 'e all trooping in for like that?" This was addressed to a pell-mell crowd rushing down the tiled passage from the hall-door. "Just see where 'e are all going—and the tiles just ruddled—and the——"

"Ma," burst from the foremost of the throng, who nearly tumbled into the dough-pan in his headlong career—"ma, there's a lady coming in!"

"A lady in black, ma," panted another sister—"coming in here. She's—she's there!" The words were uttered in a whisper of alarm, for right behind them, in the little tiled entry, stood the figure of a lady veiled and dressed in fresh mourning.

Mrs. Caerlyon rubbed the flour off her hands, dropped her white apron, and, nerving herself for the emergency by the recollection that, "whoever she was, she had no business to walk in like that, when a person was busy," came forward.

"'Tisn't Miss Trewhella—I'd like to see the saucy old thing put her foot in my house!" Mrs. Caerlyon thought in dire surprise and alarm almost, as, after a moment's hesitation, the lady in black rushed forward, meeting her before she reached the kitchen door, and, flinging back her veil, stretched forth both her arms.

"Mamma, I've come back," she cried—"I've come back, dear mamma, to you and poor dear father, and the children, and——"

"Winnie! Winnie!" Mrs. Caerlyon screamed, after a stare of blank surprise. "Winnie, darling, I'm glad to see 'e! Glad—gl—ad, Winnie!" and forthwith Mrs. Caerlyon clutched her step-daughter in her arms, kissing her loudly, and crying vociferously, as is the manner of high-tempered, sharp-featured women when excited.

"Sister Winnie"—the myth—who lived in the little pink coloured country in North America—"sister Winnie," this lady in black! Was the world coming to an end?

The children almost thought so, and, after huddling together for a moment, the younger ones joined in their mother's hysterical crying, until Winnie—fair, graceful sister Winnie, with the lovely golden-brown hair all in a mass of little glittering curls over her forehead, beneath her black crape bonnet—turned to them also with open arms, kissing them and crying over them in turn.

One of the Coastguard happened to pass at the moment,

and with grave alarm he told his officer, five minutes afterwards, that there was a strange lady all in black gone into his—the officer's—house, and “he hoped as she had brought no bad news to the missus, for he thought as he had heard the children all a-crying.”

Poor Lieutenant Caerlyon ran in panting, uncovering his gray head respectfully as he entered the strange lady's presence, and remembered nothing more, when she turned round, than a confused scene and much talking and laughing and crying, and questioning and answering, for the next hour, until poor Sarah Matilda, eager to redeem her character before the eyes of the perfect sister, got tea ready, and some small loaves nicely baked, and eggs boiled, and a bit of ham fried, and the lump sugar and sweet-cake put on the table—all which constituted the fatted calf that the poor Caerlyons had to offer to the returned wanderer—and they were all seated at the tea-table, Winnie next her father, and the tears and excitement blinding and confusing her so that she did not know whether she was eating or not.

Poor Lieutenant Caerlyon had been crying plentifully himself, but now he rubbed his eyes determinedly dry, and gazed at his long-absent daughter proudly.

“Elizabeth, hasn't she grown a—a nice little woman?” he asked, longing to say more, but withheld as he had ever been, from giving his child her meed of praise.

“She has grown downright elegant and pretty,” said Mrs. Caerlyon, with one of her short laughs; “I'd never have known her, I think, only she came into the kitchen. She's nicer-looking to my mind than Lady Mountrevor—grand as she is.”

Winnie blushed deeply—one of her own old vivid rose-red blushes.

“Oh, mamma!”

“Elizabeth, my dear,” said Lieutenant Caerlyon, laughing, “that's too far. Lady Mountrevor, Elizabeth!” But in his secret heart he had never felt so great a glow of gratitude to his wife as he felt at that instant.

“Is Lady Mountrevor here now?” Winnie asked, looking up with a quick, keen interest darkening her brilliant gray eyes.

“Yes, she is,” answered Mrs. Caerlyon, slightly, and she further proceeded to state, in the decisive off-hand way that people assume when they wish to convince others of their democratic indifference to wealth and rank, and beauty

and fasnion, that for her part she saw nothing particular in this grand Lady Mountrevor that people made such a "to-do" about, as if she were a queen—a tall, stout, showy woman, dressed like a doll in a window, with her white muslin dresses and lilac ribbons, walking along the dusty roads in summer, with a French nurse for her child—her "bone" she believed they called her. "And why she isn't at home with her husband, instead of wandering about the country, no one can make out," concluded Mrs. Caerlyon, with a sapient nod. "Not much love lost between them, sure enough."

"Ah, I hope such is not the case," said Winnie, earnestly; and, in order to change the subject—she knew to what lengths "making out" cases was carried by the maids and matrons of Tolgooth and its vicinity in the old days—she asked, "Do you ever see Madam Vivian, mamma?"

"Yes, at church, sometimes," replied Mrs. Caerlyon, with a fresh accession of the slighting tone; "and she's getting a real old woman, too, for all her grand bonnets and ribbons, and furs and things. I saw her last Sunday, and she asked when we had heard last from you. She's as proud and stiff as ever, poor old lady—shut up there in Roseworthy for half the year, without a soul to talk to but that tawny-faced old maid, Trewhella."

"Oh, Trewhella's not married yet, then?" remarked Winnie, laughing.

"Indeed she's not, nor never will be," returned the step-mother, "for all her dressed-up impudence. Coming here in her blue silks and gold chains, and running there, about the mines, after my cousin Thomas, no less! I wondered a good many times why she seemed to have a spite against 'e, Winnie, long ago; and that was one reason I'll lay any wager."

"She needed not," said Winnie, in a lower tone, a slight troubled flush rising over her face. Thronging memories quickened the beating of her heart, and her lips trembled a little as she said, with an assumed air of gaiety, "It was Susanna Edwards who should have been the object of her jealousy, if any one was. She was Mr. Pascoe's sweetheart ten years ago, and is his wife now. I think the real cause of her dislike was jealousy of her mistress's favour. She needed not to have troubled herself about that either—poor Trewhella!"

"No, indeed," put in Mrs. Caerlyon, with a sniff; "we don't want Madam Vivian's, or Madam Anybody's favor, thank

goodness ! We can pay our way honest, and look to nobody for help or credit ! ”

“ No one—no, indeed,” assented Lieutenant Caerlyon, doubtfully, looking from his wife’s to his daughter’s face, and shifting restlessly in his seat; “ we—we’ve helped each other along, thank Heaven ! ”

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Caerlyon, intercepting the glance, and no squeamish delicacy restraining her from interpreting it fully—Mrs. Caerlyon “ always spoke her mind out ” on all subjects—“ if ’e all, as ’e grow up, and be able to fill useful situations ”—with an obliquity of tone directing the general address into a particular one for Sarah Matilda’s ear—“ are as good at remembering your father and mother as your sister Winnie here, ’e’ll all do well, and prosper, and live long in the land,” Mrs. Caerlyon concluded, with a sudden grasp at a quotation of the fifth commandment.

The quick shy colour burned in Winnie’s pure delicate face at this praise of her step-mother’s—it was so grateful, so strange, to her ears, poor girl ! And the flush grew deeper under the embarrassing weight of the communication she had to make.

“ I have done only what it was my duty to do,” she said, looking down nervously and fingering her teaspoon; “ I don’t deserve any thanks for that, mamma. Whatever I sent you I could well spare—poor dear aunt Sarah was so good to me.”

The grim eccentric old woman’s generous kindness and indulgence had indeed won for her, for the first time in her life, the grateful love and trust of a fresh fond young heart; and surely, in all her years of shrewd astuteness, she had never bargained so wisely and well as when she thus purchased that fond filial care for the evening of her life, and the loving remembrance of her after death, which stirred the true heart beneath the fresh mourning dress of Winnie Caerlyon.

“ I did all I could, of course, as was my duty,” resumed Winnie, speaking rather tremblingly, for fear she might seem proud or arrogant—poor frail pale-faced little woman !—“ but I shall be able to do much more for the future, dear father—a great deal more, mamma.” Winnie was shedding tears of genuine pleasure and satisfaction. “ Aunt Sarah left—left me all—all her money ! ” sobbed Winnie, quite breaking down. “ Hannah, her servant, had the house and furniture, and a hundred dollars a year for her life; and I’ve—I’ve a thou—thousand dollars a year ! That’s about two hundred

pounds, you know, dear," she said, appealing to Sarah Matilda, who had grown pale with surprise and delight.

Vistas of hats with white feathers, and kid gloves, and long gossamer veils, like Lady Mountrevor's, began to be conjured up in Sarah Matilda's girlish, vain young head, whilst her sister spoke.

"My goodness gracious!" ejaculated Mrs. Caerlyon, her face quite in a blaze of flushed colour and excitement and gratification, her housewifely soul moved at the possibilities of a new carpet, and parlour chairs in blue damask, like her cousin Bella's, to be obtained from her step-daughter's lavish generosity. "Oh, my goodness, Winnie child, that will be splendid! Two hundred a year! Not but what we wanted it badly," she added, beginning to cry over past privations and coming luxuries, and laying claim to Winnie's legacy with an egotism of which she was hardly conscious.

But poor Lieutenant Caerlyon for once put aside his help-mate and her seven children, and all the carking cares that had dragged him down to the level of sordid poverty, and, recalling himself as he was when he married Winifred's young mother, proud, high-spirited, gallant, and generous, spoke as a father and a gentleman to his neglected daughter.

"I am glad to hear it, my dear," he said, putting a trembling hand on her shoulder—"very glad that your aunt Sarah made you such a suitable return for your years of care and attendance on her. You deserve it well, Winnie, and—and"—he faltered, becoming very conscious of the keen hard brown eyes watching him—"I've no doubt but that, as you so kindly remembered your poor little brothers and sisters when you had not much to spare from your own wants, you will remember them still—I am sure of that, Winnie—you never were unkind or neglectful to them. But your money's your own, my dear, and you must not spend it all on others; you must take care of it. You'll have a house of your own, and children of your own, some day, please Heaven, and you'll want all you have then."

"No, father, I sha'n't," opposed Winnie, crying and laughing together. And one of the "little brothers" anxiously inquired of Johnnie if "sister Winnie" had a lot of little children away over in North America. "When you don't want me any longer, I can take my money and myself away, but, until then—why, father dear, I'd never spend the half of it!" Winnie said, quite decisively. "How could I? Unless I were to dress myself like Lady Mountrevor, and

sail about the dusty roads in white muslin and lilac ribbons! I will take another cup of tea, mamma, please. What lovely long fair hair Louie has! My darling child! She always had beautiful silky hair!" And for the rest of the tea-time Winnie chatted incessantly, in dread of her father's talking so about "her money" again!—as if it were likely that she would put all that money away in the bank for her own benefit, and see those poor darlings want for anything!

But after tea, when the railway carrier brought over Winnie's heavy luggage in a van, and one of her trunks was opened in the parlour, the previous brightness of this wonderful evening redoubled to amazing intensity for the young Caerlyons. Wonderful "sister Winnie"—that is to say, this elegant young lady in black, with her American-fashioned hair and dress, who they were told was the realization of the mythical sister—she had forgotten nobody, and "everybody" had more beautiful things than "everybody else" for presents.

At the very top of the trunk was a silk umbrella—such a superb rain-shade was never seen—in double brown silk, and with ivory handle and silver name-plate.

"I know, father, you always had a fancy for smart umbrellas," said Winnie; "and I brought you that from New York."

Then there was a black velvet jacket—"the height of the Paris fashion," very rich, but simply trimmed.

"Mamma, I know that's a fancy of yours," she remarked, smiling; "I wasn't very sure of anything else, but I knew you used to like black velvets so much."

"My dear, you are very kind," said Elizabeth Caerlyon, touched and surprised out of all volubility, more at the faithful memory that had remembered her likings and fancies all these years than anything else.

"I did not know what to bring Sarah Matilda," began Winnie again, and then pausing for a few moments, while that young lady's heart grew colder and heavier, "but I imagined, if you would not think her too young to wear it, mamma—several very young girls in Winston got them this fall—that a nice cinnamon-coloured silk, with a new kind of fluted trimming in two shades, would become her very well."

"A silk dress—for me!" faintly ejaculated Sarah Matilda.

"Yes, dear—there it is," said Winnie; and, peering reverently between the folds of silk-paper, and occasionally feeling, with quivering fingers, the smoothness, and richness of the rustling fabric, Sarah Matilda passed the rest of the evening in a glorified dream.

Other treasures—unrolled from silk-paper, cotton wadding, and pasteboard boxes—emerged from out that wonderful trunk, the capacity of which seemed to be enormous. That evening blotted out half the annals of a lifetime with the children, in its succession of wonders and delights; they all stared themselves blind and talked themselves hoarse, and having—after protracted delays to an abnormally late hour—gone to bed at length, everybody stayed awake until morning, and so spent next day both actually and figuratively in dreamland.

The house was full of delightful things—there had not been such a dinner since Christmas Day as was cooking in the kitchen—roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, and a splendid rice and custard pudding full of raisins! Well might Johnnie warn Tommy on no account to be seduced into anteprenal repasts on hunks of cold pasty or bread and cheese, but “leave plenty of room” for the beef and pudding! And there were curious delicate odours floating about—odours of cedar-trunks, of perfume-sachets, of dried and ripe American apples, and millinery goods!

As for the new carpet and chairs, Winnie had arranged for them, as well as a new drawing-room, or rather new house, to go with them—a nice rented house of their own, where the Caerlyons would not be “cabined, cribbed, confined,” a family of eleven persons in a six-roomed house—the one perched above Tolgooth Bay, provided by Government for their accommodation.

Every room was strewn with new, curious, pretty, and eatable things—pictures, books, old china, dresses, jars of jelly, bottles of syrup, toys, packing cases; and everybody was examining everything, praising, wondering, discussing, questioning to their heart’s content; while Winnie—her neat black dress covered up with a large white apron and bib, such as she used to wear long ago—was running about, arranging, unpacking, tidying, cooking, talking and laughing, all the seven children following her from room to room, up and down stairs, to look at her and listen to her with breathless interest.

“I never saw any one wear their age better than ’e do, Winnie,” her step-mother remarked, with her usual blunt straightforwardness; “really, to look at ’e, one would never take ’e for more than one-and-twenty.”

Winnie was sitting on the edge of a trunk which Sarah Matilda was unpacking, and Mrs. Caerlyon, seated at a little

distance, was attentively studying Winnie's small delicate face, flushed so brightly, her smiling eyes and lips, and her beautiful carefully-arranged hair.

"Instead of going on for eight-and-twenty, mamma," supplemented Winnie; and for a moment the brightness faded from her face.

"Well, what if you are?" Mrs. Caerlyon began, when Sarah Matilda, delightedly investigating every corner and parcel in the large travelling trunk, held up a large square cedar box.

"What's in this, sister?"

"That? Oh, nothing! At least"—Winnie stooped down as if to examine the box, but Sarah Matilda noticed how very red "sister Winnie" had grown—"it's nothing but a—a jacket."

"A jacket! Oh, do let's see!" Sarah Matilda said, pulling eagerly at the twine. "Yours, sister? Where did you buy it? What kind is it?"

"It's only a very old one, dear," answered Winnie; and Sarah Matilda noticed how the red flush had totally disappeared. "Some other time we'll look at it—it's not worth opening now; I've had it for years."

"What did 'e do with the splendid sealskin jacket, Winnie," asked her step-mother—"the one Captain Tredennick gave 'e before 'e went away?"

Winnie hesitated a moment, and the colour dyed all her face in a burning blush that she strove to hide.

"Why—that is it!" she said, with a short, nervous laugh, pointing to the cedar box. "It is as good as ever, and it has kept me warm for seven long winters. It was a beautiful one; certainly."

"'E took good care of it, at all events," observed Mrs. Caerlyon, with a dry insinuating smile, looking at the soft, uncrushed fur and satin linings. And then she sat a long time in silence, covertly studying her step-daughter's winsome gentle face and light figure, and troubling her poor, manœuvring brains with numberless hastily sketched out plans.

"It won't do to say a word—she was always such a queer maid," she said to herself. But "one word" Mrs. Caerlyon felt that she must say, prompted as she was by the sight of Stephen Tredennick's long-ago gift, and those hastily-sketched mental plans. "It might be—who could tell?—stranger

things had happened," she thought, showing by words aloud whither the secret current of her meditations had gone.

"Did 'e know, Winnie, that the East Indiaman *Chittoor* is expected home the third week in March?"

CHAPTER XXI.

"I think I never remember so bleak and wild a spring," Madam Vivian observed, with a shiver; "each day seems drearier and colder and stormier than the one preceding. I have never been able to walk in the grounds these three weeks; and how you can go in and out in all weathers as you do passes my comprehension."

"It has been remarked before now, I think," said the lady addressed, "that 'where there's a will there's generally a way'; it is tolerably true, I fancy—that is, as true as most of those absurd things which people repeat with such an air of wisdom." She was embroidering a dainty piece of work of rich-hued velvet with some glittering gold fringe, and paused to admire the effect.

"It is not all true and applicable to me," returned Madam, peevishly; "I have the will, but I certainly have not the way—unless I wish to catch my death of cold with salt spray and north-west wind." She sank back in her chair, drawing a crimson Indian shawl around her with another shiver. "You wrap up in those extraordinary mackintosh things, and felt hats and boot-tops—such an eccentric costume for a young lady!—and so, I dare say, hail, rain, and snow are alike to you; but my different species of outdoor attire prevents me from attempting such feats of exercise."

"Yes, your style of costume prevents you," the younger lady assented, with a grave, scrutinizing glance at the snowy hair, the slightly-bowed figure, the soft languid hands buried in the warm crimson folds of the shawl. "When the weather gets fine, you must come up to Tregarthen and see my improvements."

Madam Vivian shivered again—affectedly this time.

"Thank you, my dear—I can hardly fancy that wretched old ruin an inviting place to explore in such weather as this. Listen!" She pointed one finger at the curtained window, and shrugged her shoulders, as old people do to convince

young people of their ignorance and simplicity on most discussed subjects.

"Yes, it rains a little," the younger lady said, imperturbably; "but it will not rain for three weeks, I trust. Tregar then will be ready for its master then."

"Really," exclaimed Madam, beginning to turn the diamond rings on her dimpled fingers, and smiling a little dubiously; "I fancied that the house was a hopeless ruin, and that it would require at least half a year's rebuilding and renovating."

"Perhaps in your opinion it would, Madam," her companion rejoined, coolly and indifferently as before. "I think it is safely habitable now, at least."

"Oh, I dare say you have worked wonders, my dear," said Madam, graciously, and smiling still; "but it is of no use hoping to make that most restless person, Captain Tredennick, settle down in the home of his fathers, as he should have done long ago—ah, twenty years ago," went on Madam Vivian, more peevishly than she had yet spoken—"twenty years ago, instead of going into the Navy—the Merchant Navy, too—the first of his name who ever did so! He should have looked after his property, married some suitable girl with money and of good birth, and had a name and a place in the county, instead of being more like a waif or a stray than anything else."

The old discord, freshly touched, jarred yet as it had jarred these many years.

"Perhaps that most restless person, Captain Tredennick, enjoys life," the lady suggested, coldly. "Be he a waif or stray, or whatever else the puissant potentates of the Cornish aristocracy choose to call him, he is to be envied in that case."

"I don't believe he enjoys it one bit more than men who marry and settle down properly," retorted Madam Vivian, sharply. "People are never one whit happier, for being allowed to follow their own unconventional ideas and whimsical fancies unopposed and untrammelled. I thought Stephen looked exceedingly old and weatherbeaten, quite a staid, solid, elderly man, with frizzled hair, when he was here last—old enough for fifty instead of forty."

"And I," said the younger lady, a pleasant affectionate smile lighting up her cold, proud, unfathomable eyes, "thought he looked just as kind and pleasant and generous as ever."

"I do not gainsay my nephew's excellent qualities of head and heart in the least, I assure you," explained Madam, stiffly; "I regretted his prematurely-aged appearance, and his lack of all near home ties. It grieves me to think that I shall never see Stephen Tredennick's children."

"How can you tell, Madam," questioned her companion, with a quizzical smile. "Stephen Tredennick may be bringing a wife home in the *Chittoor* at this moment."

"Some one to make him miserable, then, if he is," said Madam, sardonically. "Men of his age are always taken in by the first designing girls that get a chance of bewitching them. I have often told him that I expected to see some pallid, lazy young Anglo-Indian or brown-skinned Hindoo brought home to me as Mrs. Stephen Tredennick."

"*C'est possible!*" assented the younger lady, laughing. "Stephen Tredennick always had peculiar tastes about feminine charms; still, it would supply the dismal vacancy in Tregarthen House, Madam, if the yellow young Anglo-Indian, or the swarthy Hindoo maid were installed there as mistress."

Madam Vivian's chiseled lipstightened after the old haughty fashion.

"I should not consider the vacancy of the mistress of Tregarthen's place filled if Stephen Tredennick were unhappy enough to be deluded into a low marriage," she said, icily; "and, so far from having a niece to acknowledge, I should from that time cease to have a nephew!"

The proud old lady stifled the pang in her heart which her own words had occasioned, and sat composedly turning her rings, and warming her daintily-slipped feet, as if she did not know that the loss of him who had been for more than thirty years as a son to her would send her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

"Poor Stephen," commiserated the younger lady, mockingly, "he had better not meddle with matrimony then, as he is sure to do something as odd and unconventional as most of his simple, chivalrous, kindly deeds—poor old fellow!"

"I am sure my nephew will never marry any one whom I should be ashamed to own," said Madam, hotly.

"And I am equally sure of the same thing," returned the other lady, composedly.

Madam was silent. She was getting the worst of the discussion—she always did with this opponent—and sat for a long time buried in her downy chair and her crimson shawl,

gazing dreamily and sadly at the bright fire. Playing with diamond rings, and toasting gold-buckled shoes, however easy and interesting an employment, is apt to pall and become wearisome. Many other employments, occupations, and interests had palled and become wearisome to Madam Vivian of late years. Handsome, proud, and stately as she was, she was an old woman, and growing a feeble and helpless one. A lifetime spent in the society of downy chairs, Indian shawls, and diamond rings, oddly enough, is not always conducive to lengthened years of strength and activity. Madam's time had begun to hang heavily on her hands, and the shadow of the vampire-wings of *ennui* to darken the atmosphere of the green drawing-room, in spite of tinted wax-lights and the blazing warmth of radiant fires.

Was it a premonition, in this silent evening hour, which brought her lonely life, advancing age, lack of relatives and devoted friends, sadly to her mind, making her delicate hands tremble nervously, and reminding her of ebbing strength and vigour—making her feel, as she had often felt of late, but more keenly to-night than ever, that she was but an old, widowed, childless woman, and that she would gladly barter all the triumphs of her youthful belle-ship, her middle-aged fascination and cleverness, her position, her pride, her name, to possess one real heart-satisfying affection—all her own—to cherish and take pride in as other women did—a child, a grandchild even? Poor Madam Vivian!

Drearier and drearier grew the old lady's sad thoughts, whilst that cold, stately, handsome companion of hers sat aloof, guiding the gleaming gold fringe over her white fingers—not from heartlessness, in spite of those marble-like, unmoved features, cold clear eyes, and firmly-moulded lips, but from the hopeless indifference to any attempt at being understood in ideas, tastes, or feelings—the hopeless indifference to most persons and things—the hopeless indifference to the fatiguing and unsatisfactory effort to be loving and beloved, which possessed the handsome peeress, Lady Mountrevor, at six-and-twenty years of age.

And so the evening passed on, as many an evening had passed between those two, in lonely luxury, irksome companionship, unsocial relationship; and Madam Vivian, stretching out her hand to touch the bell-spring beyond her chair, felt with a weary sigh that she would gladly have welcomed any one or any event that might break the monotonous flow of the current of existence.

But the bell brought only old Llanyon the butler, his snowy hair whiter than his mistress's; and the only event likely to occur until bed-time for Madam Vivian was the arrival on a silver tray of a certain cordial drink which the butler was summoned to prepare.

Madam Vivian scarcely ever paid much heed to her servants' countenances when addressing them; now she scarcely looked up from her languid toying with her rings, or she might have noticed that the old man's usually stolid face was excited and bright, and that he rubbed his hands quickly and mechanically together whilst he waited.

"You will be sure to remember the pine-apple essence, Llanyon," Madam reminded him as he was quitting the room.

"Yes, Madam, I will be sure—certainly," he said, hurriedly.

"And bring it soon, Llanyon," his mistress ordered.

"Certainly, Madam—as soon as possible;" he rubbed his hands faster, and a smile seemed struggling hard with the decorous gravity of his face.

"Llanyon looks as if he had heard some good news," said Lady Mountrevor. —

She was quick to notice, if Madame Vivian was not—quick to notice the joy or sorrow of any one, rich or poor, to notice, to feel, to sympathize—this proud, cold, unruffled, stately peeress.

In half-an-hour Madam had calculated on being brought the luscious port wine cordial which her accommodating physician had ordered her—to strengthen her and induce sound sleep, he implied in his prescription; he did not say, to banish for a while by its cheerful stimulation the dark presence of *ennui*, or to drug the unused muscles and nervous membranes, corroding, beneath the rust of half-a-century of slothful ease, into drowsy quiescence—for he was a polite, white-handed, courteous physician—yet he meant it all the same. But in twenty minutes came a gentle tap at the door, and Madam heard the clink of the glass and silver.

"Come in," she said, and never turned her head, whilst Llanyon laid the salver, claret-jug, and tumbler at her elbow.

How lightly he moved about, Madam thought, as she glanced towards Lady Mountrevor, and saw that her work had dropped from her hand, and that she was gazing with puzzled interest at some one. Who—who was it?

"Who is it?" Madam cried aloud in surprise and pertur-

bation, as, in swiftly turning, she caught a glimpse of a young lady, dressed in mourning, standing partly behind her chair—a fair, graceful, slender girl, with rich nut-brown hair fashionably arranged in clustering masses of silky curling ends above her brow, and wearing a massive dull-gold watch-chain as the only ornament on her black dress.

Her whole fair face was lit up with colour and excitement, her gray eyes were dark and dewy with tears.

“Madam—dear Madam, I brought in your tray; I asked Llanyon to allow me—dear Madam!” The girl had clasped her little hands together in unconscious entreaty, and half knelt before the old lady’s chair.

Her reception was characteristic of Madam Vivian.

“Who is it? Who is it?” she asked sharply and impetuously, although she had recognized the long-absent face in a moment. “Who are you to come startling me? Is this Winnie Caerlyon come home again—Winnie?”

“Yes, dear Madam.”

“Indeed! I should scarcely know you. I fancied you were quite settled in America. How are you, my dear?” and she touched the girl’s cheek with her lips. “I am glad to see you again, although I think you could scarcely expect me to say so after the way in which you took your departure from me without word or message”—at this juncture Lady Mountrevor resumed her work, while a keenly sarcastic smile flickered over her lips—“but I’m glad to see you looking so well—quite improved, indeed! When did you return?”

“Yesterday evening, Madam,” said Winnie timidly, feeling all the old, half-loving, half-fearing awe of her stately patroness; her smiles and tears almost quenched in the cool dry atmosphere of her reception, while all the time, in reality, Madam was in a fever of pleasure and amazement and longing hopes that she might now and henceforth have Winnie’s company as of old. She would—she must! She would make arrangements with that dreadful step-mother—pay her well—do anything—but she would have Winnie for her own pet and *protegee* and companion from this evening forward.

She determined on it instantly, and fain would she have imperiously carried her desire into execution instantly also; and her disappointment came with a blow that shattered a whole fabric of pleasant hopes when she learned that Winnie Caerlyon was beyond the need of any money

bribe that she could offer her to become her patient little reader and companion as of old.

"Two hundred a year! Why, you are quite a little heiress, Winnie!" remarked the old lady, with a slightly-patronising smile. "And what are you going to do with it?"

Winnie never dreamt of resenting the inquiry, although the other listener at the work-table curled her haughty lip as she went on assiduously with her gold-fringing.

"Oh, there will be plenty of use found for it, Madam, or three times as much, in such a house as ours!" she remarked, cheerfully.

"And are you going to give it all to your step-mother and her seven children?" Madam demanded, sharply.

"I am going to share it all, of course, Madam, to the last sixpence, with them," replied Winnie, so quietly, and with such simple earnestness and dignity, that Madam Vivian felt deeply rebuked.

"Oh, certainly—they are your father's children," Madam said, hastily; "you were always extremely fond of them, Winnie, I believe. Ah, there is half-past nine chiming."

"And it is quite time for me to return home," remarked Winnie, rising from the low ottoman at Madam's side.

She understood the arching of Madam's eye-brows, and the change of tone that always meant dismissal from her presence in the old days. She accepted it quietly and meekly, as merely a return to the old days. Her money made no difference to a great lady like Madam Vivian—her handsome, high-bred, wealthy patroness, whom she had been accustomed to describe with such loving pride to her American friends in Winston as the very personification of the blue-blooded English aristocracy whom they had never seen.

The young girl's money, however, had made a difference. Winnie Caerlyon, come back as poor as she went, hoping and willing to be taken up again by Madam Vivian, petted, blamed, indulged, tyrannised over, treated as a friend and as an intruder, as an equal and a servant, whichever way the haughty old lady's capricious moods inclined her, would have been, at least on this evening, as demonstratively welcomed as if she were a returned prodigal. If she had only cried and begged Madam to forgive her for going away without her knowledge or permission, she would have put her arms around her and kissed her; but this cheerful, gentle, dignified young lady, with her moneyed independence, and a certain pleasant independence of word and manner, who needed

nothing from her, and had but come to visit her from an old kindly remembrance—all this displeased and disappointed the poor old lady in her peevish loneliness, and she could not help showing it. Therefore she dismissed the girlish presence that was better than sunlight on the dreary waste of her friendless life, and would not even say to her, "Come soon again to me; I have missed you sorely."

"Good night! Good night, my dear!" she said, extending her little, plump, satin-fair hand, with the icy brilliance of its splendid rose-diamonds restlessly scintillating, the object of Winnie's most fervent admiration and admiring memory through nearly eleven years.

There was a rustle of sweeping silken robes as she bade Winnie the coldly-polite farewell that she might have bestowed as well after an absence of seven days as seven years, and from the depths of the chair by the distant table, where she had been partially hidden, Lady Mountrevor's tall imperial figure moved forward, and stood at the opposite side of Madam Vivian's chair.

Winnie had not ventured on more than a swift passing glance when she entered the room; now her eyes fell, and the shy colour rose in her cheeks beneath the steady light of the proud cold gaze bent on her slender, short girlish figure.

Madam glanced up in some surprise.

"Ah—you have not met my little friend, Miss Winnie Caerlyon, before, I think, Lady Mountrevor?"

"No," said Lady Mountrevor; and Winnie, looking up hastily, encountered the haughty penetrating eyes that had indeed once before overwhelmed her in girlish shame and mortification.

The stately, handsome peeress, Lady Mountrevor, and the beautiful young lady, Mildred Tredennick, were one!

"No," Lady Mountrevor repeated gravely, but with a peculiar marked courtesy which rather contrasted with Madam's bearing toward her former *protegee*, "I have never had the pleasure of meeting Miss Caerlyon—I have heard of her very often."

"I saw you, though, several times, Lady Mountrevor," said Winnie, smiling, "before I went to America—when you were staying here eight years ago."

"Oh! that was before my niece became Lady Mountrevor, Winnie," explained Madam.

"Yes—that was before I became Lady Mountrevor," said Madam's niece, with a strange smile. "My cousin Stephen

Tredennick was here then also—you knew Stephen Tredennick, Miss Caerlyon?"

"A little—I met him two or three times," answered Winnie.

She turned away her head with a pretence at pushing a chair farther off, but Lady Mountrevor detected the quick troubled change that came over the fair placid face.

"She remembers him still," she said within herself; "she can be faithful to a memory. These frail, weak, gentle-looking beings have wonderful powers of endurance," she mused, with the sting of bitter memories rising up within her.

"Good-night, Miss Caerlyon," she said, in her accustomed grave, cold voice, with, however, a slight smile of cordiality in the proud steady eyes that scanned the girl's pure, earnest face so closely. "I trust we shall see you soon again—shall we not, aunt?"

Madam had no resource but to yield as graciously as she might.

"I hope so," said she, unbending a little. "Will you come and dine with Lady Mountrevor and myself on Monday, Winifred?"

CHAPTER XXII.

"It's an awful evening, Winnie; but of course one wouldn't like to refuse an invitation like this. There'll be lots of grand people there, I suppose, and it's very polite of Madam to ask 'e so soon to dinner after 'e came home."

Poor Mrs. Caerlyon, like other virulent democrats, was easily soothed into complaisant admiration of the aristocrats by a little flattering attention.

"It is," assented Winnie quietly; but at the same time an intuitive knowledge possessed her that the note—written with scented violet ink on coroneted paper—dashed off in Lady Mountrevor's careless flowing penmanship, had also its sole origin in Lady Mountrevor's courteous consideration.

The request that she would put off her visit on Monday, and come on Wednesday instead, when they were to have a few friends whom she might like to meet, purported to be from Madam Vivian certainly; but Winnie, with all her loyal love to her stately old friend, could not quite reconcile it to herself as having been, at all events, from her dictation.

"Though why should Lady Mountrevor take any particular notice of me?" she pondered. "She is a grand, beautiful, high-bred lady; but I should never have expected her to think twice of me."

And Winnie shook her head in unconscious earnestness at its reflection in the glass, wherein she saw it crowned with great braids and masses of tiny curls of lustrous golden brown, with a spray of half-blown white roses and buds fastened at the side—for Winnie was dressing for the dinner-party at Roseworthy, and all Winnie's toilette was undergoing inspection by at least half-a-dozen of Winnie's brothers and sisters, who, their eyes full of wonder and delight, were gathered into the little crowded bed-room, bestowing themselves on beds and chairs, and the floor—anywhere, so that they could get a good look at "sister Winnie."

"Winnie has black veils—black-lace veils all over her beautiful silk gown!" Johnnie whispered in an awe-stricken voice to Tommy.

"That's not veils—that's gennydean and net—ain't it, Sarah?" asked Louie, with much contempt for masculine ignorance. "You don't know, Johnny. You didn't see sister's necklace either, nor her bracelets, nor her slippers, all made of satin—real satin!"

Both Johnnie and Tommy joined in a sarcastic "guffaw" at this last announcement.

"They'll stick in the mud, then!" cried Tommy. "Satin'll not keep out much water—and the road's running like a mill-stream!"

Sarah Matilda, from her post at the dressing-table as a loving but most inefficient tire-woman, looked round with a grand and lofty rebuke.

"A lady always goes to a party in a covered carriage," she said to the abashed boys. "Sister is going in Madam Vivian's carriage;" and beneath the weight of the grandeur of this announcement the boys sank into silence, watching their sister's adorning with mingled amazement and fascination.

It was the first time that they had ever seen anything like it in their lives—the spectacle of a lady robed in silk and gauzy black, with a white, bare neck adorned by a necklet of flashing jet, bare arms gleaming pearly-white against the soft blackness of her flowing robes—adorned with bracelets, roses in her hair, and her feet shod with black satin. It was an event as unprecedented as undreamed of in the monotonous years of that poverty-hedged, meagre household. Their sis-

ter's simple attire was regal magnificence in the children's eyes; and "sister Winnie" herself, in virtue of her assumption of it, had become once more the mythical, far-off lady in North America, who sent bank-drafts and beautiful presents—she could not be one of them, dressed in silk and lace, and wearing jewels and white roses, with an intangible perfume of heliotrope softly emanating from the gauzy glistening folds of her lovely black dress!

Somewhat of this was in the wistful little faces that hurried down the stairs after Winnie to see her get into the carriage—a real carriage, with two splendid horses, and the coachman in livery waiting at the porch! They crowded round timidly and respectfully, with eager eyes and parted lips, watching Winnie putting on a large warm shawl. Her foot was on the step to go in, when she turned back—how often the children recalled it—how well they remembered it for years afterwards!—and kissed them fondly all round.

"My darlings, go in out of the cold," she said, with tears in her loving eyes because of those longing, wistful, timidly-admiring ones watching her—"go in, and we will have a beautiful party of our own, when we go into our new house—please goodness!"

When the carriage-door was shut, and "sister Winnie's" bright, gentle face, looking so lovely with its bright colour and sparkling eyes, was lost to view, the children ran back to the fireside, singing and dancing with glee. "Sister Winnie" was really at home—at home forever and always! "Sister Winnie" was at home—and all the pleasant future and its promised delights, which they should share with her, appeared close at hand!

* * * * *

"It's a terrible night, Miss Winnie," old Llanyon said, as he received her, with a certain kindly gratification beaming in his withered old face—"a terrible night, indeed!" He lowered his voice a little—"Madam's fretting a good deal, Miss Winnie. You know the Captain is coming home in about ten days or so, Madam Vivian believes, and she is thinking of this storm, Miss Winnie. Madam often feels like that when Captain Stephen is—ahem! Madam's maid is waiting for you, Miss Winnie."

With a total change of manner the old man ceased his communication, and, with a stiffly decorous bow and wave of his hand, consigned Winnie to Madam's maid, standing a little way off, in her silk flounces and gold chain and guipure

lace cap—black-eyed Miss Trewhella, with her crafty eyes grown craftier and harder, her smooth deferential manner more like a badly-put-on mask than ever, her sallow skin ever so much sallower.

“How are you, Trewhella?” said Winnie, even pleased to meet her old enemy, and kindly shaking hands.

“Pretty well, Miss Caerlyon—oh, thank you, Miss Caerlyon—hem! Hope you’re quite well, Miss Caerlyon. You look strong—so glad to see you look strong; better colour than you used to have, Miss Caerlyon; healthier—redder, you know—hem!”

“Poor Trewhella!” said Winnie to herself, with a keen sense of amusement that would have provoked that injured lady even more deeply could she have known it—“she is trying to insinuate that I have rouged very highly, as she used to tell me long ago that she did not admire the queer yellowish shade that was in my hair.”

Indeed Miss Trewhella, with knitted brows and formally-smiling mouth, glancing at the burnished braids and silky curls, looked as if she would much like to insinuate that Miss Caerlyon had bought a great quantity of false tresses, and that they shone too much and were too abundant; for Miss Winnie was altogether displeasing to Madam Vivian’s genteel waiting-woman.

“The idea,” she said, with much inward envious disturbance, “of her having upper skirts of net edged with blonde, like her ladyship’s—over eight-and-sixpence-a-yard black *gros grain*!”

She was absorbed in this cause of provocation, and Winnie in trying to adjust her white crape tucker without any assistance from the lady in quasi-attendance, when a loud impatient rattle of the door-handle startled both, and, before Winnie could utter a word of permission to enter, the bolt was shot back, and the door itself flung against the wall, and a young gentleman of some four or five years of age made an abrupt and unceremonious entrance, rushing towards Winnie with a violent clutch at her fragile flounces of net and gossamer, and imperiously demanding—

“Who are you?”

“Who is this little boy?” asked Winnie, striving to rescue her attiré.

Miss Trewhella drew her chin back, and her head up, and dropped her eyelids, with a withering air of reproof.

“That is Lord Eustace Mountrevor, Miss Caerlyon,” she

said, with a pitying smile and a cough—"a lovely boy! Were you looking for me, Lord Eustace, darling?" she inquired, with melting pathos and sweetness, bending down as if she were going to worship the small idol in the crimson velvet tunic.

"No, I wasn't!" retorted his lordship, aiming a kick at his devotee. "Who are you? Who are you, I say?" he repeated, with an impatient dance on Winnie's silk train, and another clutch at her gauzy skirts.

"My dear child," said Winnie, laying violent hold of "his lordship," in her turn, unclasping his hands, and keeping him firmly at arm's length in spite of his struggles, while Miss Trewhella's eyes dilated and she fairly snorted with surprise and indignation, "stand quietly and speak like a young gentleman if you want me to answer you."

"No, I sha'n't! No, I sha'n't! Let me go, you!" howled "his lordship," kicking vigorously all round. "Jeanneton—Jeanneton, I say! *Je vous demande*, Jeanneton!"

"Miss Caerlyon," said Miss Trewhella, quite in a spasm of offended dignity, "don't hold Lord Eustace in that manner, if you please. Come to me, Lord Eustace, my sweet love!"

But Lord Eustace, knowing perfectly well, with a child's unfailing acute perception, that beneath all Miss Trewhella's sugared tenderness of words she entertained as much real love for him as for a monkey, viper, or toad, or any other noxious and troublesome little creature, repelled her caresses with even more threatening demonstrations.

"Are you Lady Mountrevor's little son?" asked Winnie, gently, looking earnestly and wistfully at the child. His existence, seen in the light of that far-off past, seemed so strange—that far-off time over the remembrance of which the years had drawn a gentle veiling to soothe the unforgetten sorrow, when she had shrunk before his beautiful young mother, in the proud loveliness of her early girlhood, as her joyous, successful rival.

Why had she not been such indeed? Winnie never could tell. She had not married the cousin who loved and admired her so, whose plighted wife she had been. Why? The story of Mildred Tredennick's grand alliance, the coronet she had won for her haughty brow, the title of "my lady," and the possession of the Mountrevor rent-roll, formed answer sufficient to Winifred's simple, romantic nature; and her fond, constant heart had repressed even its own silent relief and gratification at the unexpected news which reached her

across the Atlantic, for did it not tell of pain and disappointment to him who, as she believed, had loved proud Mildred Tredennick? And, besides, that fondly-cherished growth of her own wild folly had been too severely crushed ever to bloom again. What was it to Winnie Caerlyon whether Tredennick of Tregarthen lived wedded or unwedded?

"I am!" cried the young gentleman, with the air of a small emperor. "My father is Henry, Lord Mountrevor, and my mother's Mildred, Lady Mountrevor, and I am Eustace, Lord Mountrevor; and I am——"

"Decidedly an egotistical and vulgar little boy!" spoke his mother's clear, haughty tones behind him from the open doorway. "Miss Caerlyon, I beg to apologise for my rude child. What brings you here, sir, and where is your nurse?"

She spoke in displeasure, without one indulgent, motherly smile or caress, and, with a feeling of surprise and dismay, Winnie watched her firm white hand grasp the child's shoulder tightly, push him before her out of the room, and shut the door.

"Between Lord Mountrevor and his French nurse the boy has completely become that domestic nuisance, a spoiled pet!" she said, with a careless laugh.

"Ah, poor dear little fellow, he was only asking me who I was!" extenuated Winnie, whose tender maternal heart this little episode had troubled; causing her at the same time a quick, intangible sensation of wonder and pity for the young mother whose child was evidently so small a source of either pride or pleasure.

"I think he was giving you a good deal of gratuitous information beside," replied Lady Mountrevor, in the same tone. "I cannot imagine who teaches the child to speak in that detestably *parvenu* style," and the light of displeasure in her ladyship's flashing eyes shone right on Miss Trewhella's moonshiny, deferential simper, and extinguished it on the spot. "Will you come into my sitting-room until it is time for the guests to arrive?" Lady Mountrevor said, courteously. "I fear they will be a very limited number on such a terrible night as this. This way, Miss Caerlyon. The room is warmer and more comfortable than the drawing-room just now, I think," and she pushed aside one of the heavy velvet *portieres* that hung before the doors of all the principal rooms in Roseworthy, and disclosed her suite of apartments—four in all—communicating with each other—beautiful nests of rooms, all blue-velvet pile and amber-silk hangings,

redolent of exotic perfumes from rare foreign plants in tall marble *jardinières* and flowers in a Dresden lily vase, and aglow with the warm light of ruddy fires on the marble hearths.

Miss Trewhella paused to watch, scarcely crediting her powers of vision, until she saw Winnie's black dress glide in, followed by the haughty peeress in her long robe of glistening snow-white silks, without a touch of colour to relieve their frosty, wraith-like purity, save the massive bands of dead gold and emeralds clasped on her waxen arms, and the great locket hanging from the black velvet ribbon around her throat—the splendid locket with its magnificent emeralds, which her ladyship wore so constantly. And then the velvet curtain closed, and hid the *tete-a-tete* interview between Winnie and Lady Mountrevor from Miss Trewhella's jealous gaze.

"What's up now?" she muttered, perturbedly. "Her high and mighty ladyship a-taking of her up so! I thought she wouldn't notice her no more than if it was Jeanneton."

To Miss Trewhella the good fortune that fell to others was looked upon as a positive loss to herself; all that was not for her was against her in her estimation; and it was with a martyred sense of unredressed wrongs that the injured lady betook herself to her mistress's toilette.

"Reely, Madam, you'll be delighted when you see Miss Winnie," she commenced, with so many smiles and such excessive amiability that her mistress at once, with inward impatience, perceived her abigail to be in one of her worst moods—"she's dressed up so stylish, reely, and in such spirits! No wonder!"

"Why?" Madam asked.

"Oh, Madam, no wonder! Why, everything! Your inviting of her here so beautiful and kind, and sending your carriage and horses for her. Michael's wet through and through going up that terrible hill at Tolgooth in the torrents of rain, and the carriage's one patch of yellow mud. You never saw the like, Madam!"

"Do hurry with that plait!" interrupted her mistress, shortly.

"And her ladyship making so much of her, too!" pursued Miss Trewhella, satisfied with the irritating effect of her first piece of information, and quitting it for another, productive of possibly greater annoyance. "Reely, I was surprised—quite as if Miss Winnie was her sister—a great lady like Lady Mountrevor! Such condescension, you know, Madam!"

"Her ladyship has a great many fancies," said Madam, coldly. "She has no reason to feel any peculiarly deep interest in Miss Caerlyon that I am aware of."

"Ah, well, of course it's a very nice thing for poor Miss Winnie to have Lady Mountrevor notice her like that!" the amiable waiting-woman continued, smiling meditatively over her mistress's violet dinner-dress. "Lady Mountrevor has just the same ways as her cousin, Captain Tredennick, hasn't she, Madam? Takes up fancies, and likings and dislikings for people, just like Captain Stephen used"—she was putting the last touches to Madam's velvet drapery, and reserved her trump card to the last. "It's a terrible stormy night," she murmured plaintively, as if partly to herself. "I do hope it'll all pass away, and the fine weather come before Captain Stephen comes into the Channel. Madam, is it a week or ten days now until we may expect him? Miss Winnie was reckoning the time, but I forget what she said."

"Miss Winnie!" Madam ejaculated, involuntarily, with an angry start and contraction of her eyebrows. "Miss Winnie knows nothing about the probable time of Captain Tredennick's return, further than she might learn from common report," she continued, more quietly and carelessly. "You must have been mistaken, Trewhella."

"Oh, I dare say—perhaps I was, Madam," Miss Trewhella returned, sneering as broadly as she dared.

"Yes; and you think I was mistaken, too, don't you? Oh, yes; and you're not vexed at all? Oh, dear, no!" Miss Trewhella muttered to herself malevolently, as she stood to watch her stately mistress descending the wide marble staircase with slow, deliberate steps, looking so like a noble old white-haired queen in her purple velvet train, and with a jet tiara on her silvery rippled tresses. "You're too proud, and grand, and haughty to see what's under your eyes; but it's not for want of me showing of it to you," she went on, eyeing Lady Mountrevor's drawn *portiere* venomously, and debating whether she dared venture inside it with her ear to the key-hole for a few minutes. "You're so grand, and every one belonging to you so high and mighty, you think she'd never dare! And she wouldn't, either—oh, no, not at all! And you wouldn't have had for your niece, seven years ago, the Coastguardman's daughter, Mrs. Stephen Tredennick, only for me a-putting of you up to things, and a-telling of you what he meant—a great soft dolt, with his paying visits and taking walks, and twenty pound presents—oh dear, no! And

she haven't been to America for nothing, with her painted cheeks and heaps of curls, like one of the girls in the staryscope pictures, running over here fetching and carrying for Madam as soon as ever she heard tell of the Captain coming home—such meanness!" the gentle soliloquist said, with a writhe of her upper lip that completely uncovered one sharp yellow eye-tooth to the roots. "And my lady, with her notions, a-taking of her up, and making much of her, just for her contrary ways! I'd let her know what Miss Winnie was planning, so meek and mild, if I dared to speak to her at all—only one might as well go catch a nettle or a hot flat-iron as meddle with my Lady Mountrevor when she didn't like."

But, notwithstanding this alarming comparison of Lady Mountrevor's powers of punishing unrelished interference, as the minutes slipped by and that blue velvet curtain remained provokingly immovable, Miss Trewhella found it impossible to resist one fleeting gratification of her angry curiosity, and noiselessly she slipped inside the folds.

Unhappily the reward for her painful pursuit of knowledge, demanding the doubling of her angular frame nearly in two, keeping the keyhole uncovered and her ear disagreeably squeezed against the orifice, was scanty and unsatisfactory, resulting, in point of fact, simply in "white roses"—a cluster of waxen-white blossoms and drooping buds. Costly, fragrant, carefully-nurtured green-house treasures they were, nestled amidst dark green leaves and mossy stems, in the slender primrose-hued lily vase.

As Lady Mountrevor and Winnie rose to leave the room the former noticed her companion's silent gaze of admiration at the flowers.

"Do you like flowers, Miss Caerlyon?" she asked.

"Very much," said Winnie, her eyes fixed on the roses as she turned reluctantly away—"and those are so beautiful."

Lady Mountrevor drew away from the table where the vase stood, with a slightly embarrassed air.

"Come downstairs with me, and you shall choose from the greenhouse," she said, hurriedly; "you will pardon my not offering you those. I—I never wear them—they are so fragile, and fade so soon, you know."

"Oh, Lady Mountrevor, how could you think that I wished for the flowers from your vase!" exclaimed Winnie, in surprise. "They are indeed too fragile and beautiful to be crushed and withered in one's dress or hair."

"And yet you wear them!" her ladyship said, with a

slight smile, glancing at the spray on Winnie's brown tresses. "Oh, those are French cambric and silk things," returned Winnie, slightly; "but these are lovely soft pure white real ones. Besides——" She paused with a timid flush and glance at Lady Mountrevor's cold calm face.

"Besides what?" There was no trace of mockery in her unsmiling eyes—no sarcasm in the compressed lines around her chiseled lips.

"Besides," said Winnie, a little unsteadily, "I have associations—memories—about white roses that make them seem almost sacred flowers to me. I never could make an adornment of those lovely living buds and half-unclosed petals."

She paused half fearfully again. Madam Vivian would have received this confession with such a delicate keen-edged ridicule—how was it that haughty Mildred, Lady Mountrevor, was so much quicker to comprehend, so much more quietly sympathizing, even in her proud reserve?

"Have you?" she said, and the darkness of a shadow seemed to overspread her white polished brow and dark brilliant eyes. She turned partly aside, and Winnie saw her long fair jeweled fingers close and tighten convulsively for an instant around the emerald locket resting on her neck. "So have I."

The words seemed to escape from her lips without her knowledge and Winnie half doubted if they were meant for her ear.

"Ah," remarked Winnie, with a sigh, as they left the room together, "my association with them is connected with a grave—a lonely grave, far away."

And, as she sadly spoke, the white roses seemed to magically waft the memory of that far-off lonely grave on their sweet dying breath, the rush and sway of the wintry storm sweeping around the old Cornish mansion seemed to re-echo softly in the murmuring of thick-clothed elm-boughs in the scented summer morning breeze, and the still warm radiance of the wide lamplit hall and marble staircase changed to the glowing sunlight in that sheltered nook where the daisies bloomed and the dewy roses twined their wreathing stems, and where the morning rays, golden and bright—ah, so bright, so glad, so sparkling!—fell on the long polished oak coffin and its dazzling plate enriched with white blossoms as it was lowered swiftly and surely into the darksome grave.

"With a grave—a grave far away!" Lady Mildred paused suddenly, and even amidst her confused surprise Winnie

noticed how the pale lips parted widely and a wild eager look blazed in the proud dark eyes. "So is mine!" she whispered, hoarsely, the wild eagerness of her gaze fading into one of far-away dreary blankness.

Another moment, however, and, ere Winnie could question or scarcely comprehend, her companion had passed the threshold of the drawing-room, and entered the presence of smiling well-dressed dinner guests and Madam Vivian, and Mildred, Lady Mountrevor, was the courteous, unruffled, stately peeress once more.

The soul of the amiable Miss Trewhella might have been illumined by the gladness of content could she but have known how effectually her malicious hints had aided in spoiling poor Winnie Caerlyon's enjoyment of her first dinner party at Roseworthy House. All unconscious as she was of any cause for such an effect, she could not but perceive that Madam Vivian's chill courtesy and smilingly polite indifference to her presence was not the reception she would have been favoured with had she been welcome. Any doubts she might have had as to the author of the invitation were at an end before the evening was half over.

"I did wrong to accept it—I did wrong to come at all," Winnie thought, with keen pain and mortification. "Why did Lady Mountrevor ask me? Madam did not wish it, I see quite plainly. I wish the evening were over—I wish I were home again!" she said, earnestly, with the tears rushing to her eyes, as she withdrew to a distance from the guests, who seemed quite occupied in each other and their hostesses.

There were but three ladies who had ventured out, through darkness and tempest, to accept the invitation of Madam of Roseworthy, and, whilst the two gentlemen finished the '47 port in the dining-room, the doctor's wife and the minister's wife and daughter were in a delighted state of admiration over "dear Lady Mountrevor's" embroidery, and "dear Lady Mountrevor's" portfolio of foreign sketches, in the drawing-room.

"Miss Caerlyon!" Madam called, sharply.

"Well, Madam?" said Winnie, rather startled, and drawing back from the window, where she had been drearily looking out through the parted curtains at the stormy sky, with the black clouds scudding wildly athwart its gloomy arch, and listening to the furious roar of the breakers, borne on each hissing gust of wind, out there by Tregarthen Head, the

ghastly gleam of the white fury of which was dimly visible through the murky night.

"Is the feminine element in our company too preponderating to be pleasing to you?" Madam demanded with a cold smile. "Perhaps you will kindly enliven us with a little music?"

The request was made in the tone of a command, and Winnie felt it to be so.

"With pleasure," she said, formally and gravely, though she coloured deeply as she moved at once to the piano; "I was only looking out at the storm, and thinking of it."

But this slight apologetic remark touched right on the point of the nervous anxiety which had been secretly filling Madam Vivian's heart with restless irritable pain.

"Ah," she rejoined, shortly, and almost brusquely, "you ought to feel very thankful that no one dear to you, or belonging to you, is tossing on the stormy water to-night."

Winnie made no reply; and, sitting down to the instrument, her fingers first softly touched a prelude, and then glided into a rippling fantasia, an old cherished favourite, learned years before on the piano that was her old aunt's gift—it made her think of sitting by the shore in Tolgooth Bay, and hearing the waves around Tregarthen Reef, she said, to Miss Sarah Whitney's disgust at the girl's faithful love for her comfortless English home.

It was called "Sea Songs," and the opening ripple and rushing rhythmical beat of a summer's sea-waves changed into the passionate sobbing and wailing of a gathering tempest. There was the siren's treacherous song in each deceitful pause and lull, and then the swift-rushing storm broke. The siren's plaintive song arose again—it might have been the dirge of drowned mariners, so softly and sweetly mingled the plaintive tender melody with the ripple of the waves as they subsided to summer calm once more.

"Thank you, Miss Caerlyon; you play with great expression," Lady Mountrevor said.

"Yes, indeed!" "Charming!" "So sweet!" broke from the lips of Lady Mountrevor's admirers.

"Yes, very sweet, but very sad," Madam observed, irritably. "It is not a particularly cheering night outside. Can you not give us something gayer, my dear? That is as melancholy as the 'Dead March.'"

"Yes, indeed—very melancholy—so sweet, but melancholy," the lady guests re-echoed again.

"The 'Dead March in Saul' is a grand piece of music, Madam," the Doctor observed, sententiously—he had just entered with the minister, and heard Madam's concluding words—"a grand piece! And then the associations—our brave soldiers, the muffled drums, the riderless horse—so touching—ahem!—a grand piece of music—never could hear it unaffected, Madam."

"Perhaps you would like to hear it now, Doctor?" Madam said, with a rather vexed smile. "I am sure Miss Caerlyon will oblige you, it would just complete the effect of that howling wind and roaring sea outside."

"I should, very much," returned the Doctor, pleasingly obtuse to Madam's clouded brow and his wife's warning glance and subdued cough—"it is very long since I heard it—if Miss Caerlyon will be kind enough."

"My dear, Madam does not like it; Madam would like something gayer this wild stormy night, really," his wife said aloud, with a strong emphasis and a smiling frown, which betokened an impending certainty of matrimonial rebuke at a more convenient season.

"Oh dear me, not at all," Madam interposed, sharply, displeased at the subservience to her sentimental fancies, as it seemed. "If Doctor Lake has the slightest wish for that particular piece of music, I can have no possible objection, of course."

"I can not remember it without the music—it is so long since I played it," said Winnie, looking distressed.

"You will find it amongst the old music on the lowest tier of the study shelves," said Madam, determinedly. "Take Llanyon with you, Winnie, as the book is very large and dusty."

Doctor Lake apologised, feeling uncomfortably that he was trespassing on the courtesy of his hostess. Mrs. Lake apologised deeply and profusely, getting red in the face, and darting wrathful glances at her spouse; but Madam was smilingly obstinate in desiring the wished-for music to be brought.

Large and dusty it undeniably was; but Winnie requested no help to discover it, or carry it for her; and, as she stooped over it to examine the titles on the time-yellowed pages by the light of the one candle she carried, her ear caught the soft rustle of a dress, and she saw, standing in the dim light of the expiring coals in the grate, a tall figure in snowy white.

She dropped the book with an irrepressible cry of alarm, and then saw that the candle-light shone on the silvery sheen of Lady Mountrevor's silken robe, and glowed in the liquid-green hue of her splendid emerald ornaments.

"Did I startle you?" she said, with a slight smile. "Have you found the piece of music, dear?"

"Yes," answered Winnie, with a sigh, and a quick shiver; "I wish Doctor Lake had not asked for it, though—I do not want to play it to-night."

"Why?" Lady Mildred asked, gently, taking both Winnie's hands in hers, and looking into the dark-gray troubled eyes.

She looked so like and so unlike Winnie's last memory of her, standing on that very spot on that wintry evening long ago—with her bright, persuasive smile, her outstretched hands, her tall, supple form in its imperial perfection of beauty; but the gaiety was gone from the brilliant eyes, the girlish bloom and dimpled softness from the statuesque features—those long, slender fingers wore the badge of her changed estate, and Lady Mountrevor, though more coldly beautiful, had lost the chief charm of Mildred Tredennick.

She stood there—the proud, beautiful young lady—her bearing kinder, more winningly gracious than Winnie could have imagined possible, as exhibited towards herself; but where was the other—he who had stood there, pleading, in love with that false, fair woman? Where was Stephen Tredennick? On the waste of the wild ocean, this dark, dreadful night, whilst Mildred Tredennick stood there smiling calmly, wearing the wedding-ring of a peer of the realm!

"Because," said Winnie, the quick tears glistening on her dark lashes, and her emotional face paling from the fast throbbing of her heart, as she looked steadfastly into Lady Mountrevor's inscrutable eyes—"because it is a death dirge, and out there, amongst the wild waves, there are drowning sailors' cries as they go to their untimely doom—shrieking for the help that will never come, whilst I play a funeral march to please drawing-room guests!"

If she had expected to see the proud face blanch and droop abashed before her passionate reproach, she was mistaken. Lady Mountrevor's features softened in a sad, thoughtful look, and she sighed deeply as she looked out into the murky darkness of the driving storm.

"It is dreadful to think of," she responded, returning Winnie's steadfast gaze; "but, as Madam said, there is no

one you love in danger of the darkness and the stormy water."

"Yes, Lady Mountrevor," Winnie Caerlyon corrected, with her usual quiet, rigid truthfulness, "there is one who is very dear to me out in this night's darkness on the stormy ocean."

"Indeed," said Lady Mountrevor gently; "then our grief and anxiety are the same."

"Madam—Lady Mountrevor—I do not understand," Winnie stammered, struggling with the crimson flush of shy alarm that suffused all her face and neck.

"I mean," explained Lady Mountrevor, looking at the girl with a half-sad, half-satirical smile, "that you have equal cause with me in mourning for your absent friend. I grieve for my dear cousin's possible danger amidst the tempest of wind and waves, brave sailor as he is—for you know," she added, gravely, the piercing light of her keen brilliant eyes penetrating into the depths of the girl's true soul, "Stephen Tredennick is at sea to-night."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Towards morning the storm raged more wildly still. Not for years, even on that rock-bound rugged coast, had there been experienced so fierce and terrible a tempest, in which were commingled pitchy darkness, blinding torrents of rain, and a sweeping, howling gale that unroofed houses by the score, blew down farm-buildings, uprooted the old forest trees, and lashed clear gurgling streamlets and peaceful-flowing rivers into deep headlong floods, their swift currents all stained with the ruin that they had wrought, and changed the dark hissing waves around the Black Reef of Tregarthen into an awful boiling cauldron, whitening miles of heaving mountainous waves with ghastly winding-sheets of froth, and flinging wild showers of spray with each shriek of the contending elements sheer up the shelving and jagged face of the dark precipice for hundreds of feet.

The clock had struck the first hour of the new day, and sleeplessly Winnie Caerlyon tossed and turned, and finally sat up partially dressed, tightening her warm shawl around her, keeping a dreary vigil between her bedside and the window. It seemed to have an awful fascination for her, that

impenetrable darkness, lit up on the horizon with the weird phosphorescent light of the crested billows, and filled with the shrieking and sobbing of the dreadful voices of the tempest.

"I wish I could have gone home," she muttered, feverishly; "some one would have been sure to be awake and stirring—father, or Sarah, or the boys; and the men would have been out on the cliffs perhaps. I could have sat up with some one to talk to at the fireside! I cannot rest here—I am afraid of the storm. I never was afraid of a storm before," she added shivering closer to the black window-panes, and straining her aching eyes, "but I am afraid of this. It is so awful—it sounds so full of destruction and death. And oh, the lives—the lost lives! O Heaven have mercy on those struggling with the merciless sea to-night!" she cried, sobbing in kneeling prayer. "Would that I could do something to succor and save! It is so dreadful to sit here safe and sheltered, and to know that the yawning gulfs of the great waves are swallowing brave men down, struggling and crying, and thinking of their mothers and wives and little children! Oh, poor men—poor women! And I can do nothing!"

"They are all sleeping," she broke out presently; the womanly heart adding with passionate bitterness—"sleeping whilst he is perhaps in peril. They do not distress themselves to wake although he may be in his death agony—they, his nearest and dearest on earth!"

But the one whom Winifred's jealous love wronged in thought most deeply knew as little unbroken rest as she.

For another hour the storm shrieked and thundered, until the old mansion, with its massive century-and-a-half foundations, trembled like a living thing in fear. Winifred, in icy cold and darkness—for the last ember of the fire had faded—lay shivering, huddled in her shawl, watching the black casement still, and longing for the dawn. Presently a light hurried tap came to her door, and a voice called—

"Winnie—Winnie Caerlyon!"

"Yes, yes! Who is it?" she cried, starting up.

"It is I—Lady Mountrevor," and the door opened, and a tall dark form came swiftly in. "Are you afraid—are you afraid of the storm, Winnie?" she said, trembling with agitation. "I am—I can not rest! I thought perhaps that you were frightened too. Did I wake you? It is an awful night. Are you in bed, Winnie?"

"Yes, lying on the bed; I am half-dressed. What is it, Lady Mountrevor?" Winnie asked, frightened and bewildered, more by her visitant's strange manner than anything else.

"Are you not cold? Is your fire out? How dreadful!" the latter exclaimed, in the same hurried, trembling way. "I should go mad if I did not keep lights and fires blazing on such a night as this! I suppose I have a bad conscience, Winnie. Won't you come down to my rooms? They are more comfortable. Oh, do!" she called, impatiently. "And your window blinds undrawn! Look at the darkness! Oh, do come down and keep me company, child!" She caught Winnie's arm and almost dragged her off the bed.

"Has anything frightened you—has anything happened?" gasped Winnie, struggling to her feet, and groping for her shoes. "I am afraid of the storm; the thundering of the waves, and the dreadful screaming noise of the wind coming in over the Head, kept me from closing my eyes."

"Dreadful!" responded Lady Mountrevor, wildly. "It sounds exactly like death-cries! I fell asleep—I wish I had not. I dreamed—oh, I dreamed so awfully!" She was hurrying Winnie along the corridor as she spoke, and Winnie felt her shudder like one in an ague. "What did you play that 'Dead March' for? That idiot, to make such a musical selection! It has been ringing and beating in my ears ever since—ever since, Winnie. I have been dreaming of coffins, and of every one I ever knew and cared for being laid in them—every one. I knew all the dead faces. Of all nights in the year to play the 'Dead March!' Heavens! I shall never want to hear it again! It seems beating all around me—the air is full of it!"

"Dear Lady Mountrevor," said Winnie, terrified, "it is but your imagination."

"My imagination!" she echoed. "I wish that my imagination were not quite so vivid. And it is so long ago—seven years now," she muttered. "Why need it all come back to me to-night? That 'Dead March'—that was it; they did not play it then. No, no—it was a lonely funeral—a lonely grave in a far-off land! Why did I think of it?"

The flood of cheerful radiance, the soft glare of the rose-hued wax candles from her warm, pleasant rooms, streamed out on the dark lobby, and shone on her face, which was white and stony, with distended glassy eyes, like those of a sleep-walker.

"I am so sorry that I played it. I wish Doctor Lake had not been stupid enough to ask for it. But for Madam bidding me, I should have refused," Winnie said, earnestly, trying to soothe Lady Mildred's strange distraction. "Shall I read to you, Lady Mountrevor? Perhaps if we read some Psalms they might make us feel calmer. It is this terrible storm which has shaken your nerves."

"Psalms!" Lady Mountrevor repeated, with scornful impatience—"I could not listen to Psalms, child! Psalms, with that ringing through my brain, and voices that are silent in the grave for years calling my name, and dead faces looking at me!"

She flung herself down before the bright fire, shrinking against a pillowed couch, and stretching out her arms to the blazing warmth, like one who was almost chilled to death.

"Let me get you something—a glass of wine, or some cordial or other—do, Lady Mountrevor—you look so cold and ill!" urged Winnie, earnestly.

"Just as you like, since you are kind enough to propose it," she returned, listlessly. "I did not wish to wake my maid—servants are not always acceptable attendants, and the girl is better asleep. There is wine in that little buffet at the window, Miss Caerlyon—pray take a little yourself; and there is some sal-volatile on the table in my dressing-room."

Passing through the bedchamber to the dressing-room beyond, Winnie sought for the bottle of which Lady Mountrevor had spoken, and, seeing a small phial of essence of cloves lying beside it in the little medicine casket, she secured it also, and turned to leave the room, when a strong light, shining beneath a door leading to an adjoining apartment, and the sound of voices arrested her steps—a woman's voice, subdued, but full of distress, mingling soothing and supplications, and a child's fretful, half-articulated complaints.

Impulsively she went forward and opened the door. A dark skinned, foreign-looking woman was kneeling on the floor beside a child's cot, and holding up before her a large black-and-white crucifix, to which she was fervently praying, mingling her tearful petitions with caressing words to the child, who, partly awake, was staring at the white figure on the ebony cross, with his little hands folded in imitation of his nurse, peevishly questioning her and crying also.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she ejaculated, as Winnie came in, dropping the crucifix, and rising to her feet. "Mademoiselle!"

"I came in to know if anything is the matter. This

dreadful storm has awoke you also, I perceive," said Winnie, kindly—"I am sitting up with Lady Mountrevor."

"*Ah, Ciel, n'est-ce pas terrible, mam'selle?*" the woman cried, clasping her hands. "I have been praying *que le bon Dieu eut pitié. Le petit ange*, he was what you call full of the *terreur*; and we were praying *a notre Seigneur* that the tempest might soon finish."

"Pray on, then," said Winnie, gently. "Heaven always hears believing prayer. But the child—he would be better asleep, I think; or shall I take him to his mother for a little while?"

"*Le petit ange*" looked decidedly unprepared for rest or repose, as he kicked and wriggled himself from beneath the bed-clothes, looking as if he had made up his mind to endure this sort of thing no longer.

"Does *miladi* have the wish for the child, mam'selle?" the nurse inquired, in doubtful astonishment, trying to restrain her "*bebe*," her "*petit ange*," from flinging himself head foremost on to the floor.

"Oh, I think she would; he would cheer her up," said simple Winnie, who thought that the presence of a little child must be a panacea for every distress of a mother's breast.

"Had mam'selle not better make the inquiry of *miladi*?" persisted the nurse. "*Miladi* does not of usual permit *le cher petit* to remain in her boudoir."

"Very well," said Winnie, leaving "the little angel" stamping and howling at not being permitted to follow her.

"The child!" cried Lady Mountrevor, raising her head in displeased surprise. "Why on earth should I trouble myself with a cross, screaming child, Miss Caerlyon? I presume that his nurse and my own maid are sufficient attendants for the young gentleman without me."

"Oh, I asked only because I thought he might cheer you and distract nervous brooding feelings," said Winnie, feeling again that stunned sensation of pity and surprise at the lack of maternal tenderness that seemed so unnatural to her.

"You have unfortunately mistaken me for a very domestic character, I fear, Miss Caerlyon," her ladyship observed, coldly. "I suppose you are astonished because I do not delight in devoting myself to the amateur nursing of Lord Mountrevor's heir? Are you not?" she persisted, as Winnie, shocked and distressed, remained silent.

"I thought that a mother always liked to have her child with her," she said, at length.

"Well, then, in that case I am different from all other mothers," Lady Mountrevor retorted, recklessly. "I never wished to have a child—I never wished to see him when he was born—I never cared for him—he never cared for me—never will—why should the child? He'll hate me when he grows up, and wish me dead for the sake of my jointure income."

"Lady Mountrevor, you cannot mean what you say!"

"I do mean it!" she cried, passionately. "Let me speak, or I shall go mad to-night! Let me speak: I can trust you—I am sure I can. Stephen said that you were to be trusted—poor, dear Stephen! I must get relief from all these maddening thoughts. I think I am delirious. Give me that draught, Winnie; there are such memories surging through my brain—such fancies—such wild fancies! Winnie Caerlyon, may I trust you?" she asked catching eagerly at her hand. "Can I trust you to hear and see and be silent—for Stephen Tredennick's sake, if not for mine—to be silent hereafter and always—never to say that you once saw her ladyship, Mildred Mountrevor, transformed into a mad woman?" she said, with a harsh, bitter laugh.

"If I were base enough not to be silent for your own sake now and for ever, Lady Mountrevor," answered Winnie, quietly, "there would be little use in requesting my discretion for Captain Tredennick's sake. I have unfortunately been the cause of arousing painful reminiscences and uncomfortable feelings more than once during the past evening," she pursued, gently and soothingly, to the woman whom, as she believed, Stephen Tredennick had loved best on earth—"let me try to banish them."

"Banish them? How you talk! Ah, Winnie, you can not banish them!" Lady Mildred moaned drearily. "You could not, unless you could give me the past over again—unless you could raise the dead and give them to me once more!"

"The dead!" repeated Winnie, sadly.

"The dead," Lady Mountrevor returned—and Winnie saw the proud head bowed in weeping—perhaps she was the only one who had so seen it since Mildred's childhood—"the dead looking at me from the white faces of those roses over there, the dead presence surrounding me in their perfume, and the burial of the dead whom I loved and lost sounding in my ears in the muffled tramp of that 'Dead March'!"

"It is so strange!" Winnie Caerlyon whispered, and a cold,

magnetic thrill of some impending terror or surprise chilled her blood, while her voice was almost drowned in the noises of the storm.

"No, it is not strange," Lady Mildred said—"it is not strange at all. Death is abroad to-night, Winnie, and the spirits of our dead may be nearer to us than we imagine. You spoke of it, too."

"Of what?" asked Winnie, trembling a little, as she drew near to Lady Mildred's side.

"Of some one you had lost—of a lonely grave in a foreign land. The white roses reminded you as well as me."

"Ah, yes," said Winnie, willing to change the dreary current of the unhappy young lady's thoughts by some slight variation in the conversation; "but then it was not one whom I had known and loved, or who cared for me. It was a stranger's grave, dear Lady Mildred—a young English stranger, who was buried in an old cemetery in Winston, where I lived. I could not help going to his funeral, for I was an English stranger too. I felt as if I had lost a friend, though I had never seen him, poor young fellow; and I put on mourning, and went and laid a few sprays of white roses on his coffin. I can never look at them now—never smell their perfume—without thinking of the poor young soldier's funeral on that lovely summer morning, and seeing the white flowers around the name-plate as they laid him down in his lonely grave. Poor young Albert Gardiner!"

"What!" The word broke in a shrill, hoarse cry from Lady Mountrevor's white, parched lips.

"Albert Gardiner—a young ensign in the British Army," Winnie faltered, shrinking backward in involuntary terror; "did you know him, Lady Mountrevor?"

"Know him—know him!" She followed Winnie, clutching at her dress in frantic eagerness. "Tell me—tell me! Did you never see him—never once before he died?" she cried, piteously. "Oh, Albert darling! Oh, Bertie, my darling boy! Albert dearest! A lonely grave in a foreign land! This was what was coming; this was what I dreamed of him—dreamed of him lying in his coffin!"

"Who was he?" Winnie said, overwhelmed with bewildered fear. "Lady Mountrevor, who was Albert Gardiner?"

The question seemed to recall her to herself. She loosed her hold of Winnie Caerlyon, turned away with a groan, and, sinking in a chair, buried her face in her hands.

"Who was he indeed!" she moaned. "Who was Albert Gardiner that Lord Mountrevor's wife should mourn him?"

"Some one you loved?" whispered Winnie Caerlyon, marvelling if indeed it could be so.

"Some one!" Lady Mountrevor cried, rising from her chair and pacing the room like a caged creature. "The only living creature I ever loved—ever could love—ever will love!" the unhappy woman said, raging in fierce rebellion over the bereavement. "They took him from me; they persecuted us until they got us asunder—until they drove him out of the country, and hurried me away into seclusion—we who loved each other so—who would have been so faithful to each other, and so happy if they had let us—they—the worldly, smiling, selfish schemers—my father and mother and Madam Vivian! We loved each other from the time that we were a little boy and girl, Winnie Caerlyon," she went on, passionate sobs shaking her utterance; "we meant to love each other always—to marry as soon as I was of age; and Bertie used to talk to me of our home in some far-off Indian bungalow, or some fort in a distant land—we two together; and we should have been so happy! They did their best to make me forget him—Madam Vivian most of all. She is a hard worldly woman, Winnie Caerlyon, and you know it as well as I, though you have borne with her so well and patiently. They did their best, but it was useless—useless; if they had been endeavouring ever since, they could not have succeeded—never—never, but for Death helping them! I never could be false to him, he never could have been false to me in life, but Death stepped in to part Bertie Gardiner and me for ever, much to my dear relatives' relief! Much to their relief," she repeated, after a pause, with a slow concentrated bitterness—"though Madam Vivian announced 'the sad news,' as she called it, in so smoothly condoling a voice and manner—much as she announced the death of my god mother, who bequeathed me her fortune. She entreated of me not to say too much, I remember, and proposed next day that we should drive to the Longchamps race-course for a change of scene to cheer and amuse me."

"Oh, dear Lady Mildred, she did not mean to slight your grief. Madam did not understand feelings like yours. Madam never loved and lost as you did," said Winnie, quite forgetting, in the simplicity of her grief, that it was a peeress of the realm she was embracing and crying over so heartily.

"You would excuse her without ceasing, Winnie Caerlyon.

Why, I know not—unless it is because of your long-suffering amiability,” Lady Mildred remarked, harshly scornful. “Irrespective of other wrongs, Madam Vivian has done me one that I can neither forgive nor forget.”

“What was it?” Winnie asked, timidly.

The stormy shrieking of the wind had paused for a time, spent and breathless from its rage, but the thundering roar and beat of the wild surges sounded fearfully loud and near in the ominous lull; and in the lull came a faint, distant booming sound.

“The wrong of compelling me to sacrifice and trample upon my feelings in spite of every instinct of my nature, which shrank from the trial,” said Lady Mountrevor, with gloomy hopelessness—“the wrong of compelling me by fear of her displeasure, the force of her authority, the dread of her ridicule on a night—a summer night—seven years ago, Winnie Caerlyon—to go to a ball with her with a presentiment of coming sorrow like a leaden weight on my girlish heart, with a fevered brain, a weary, spiritless frame, my eyes burning from weeping—the wrong of compelling me to dress, and adorn, bedeck, bejewel myself, banish all traces of the load of apprehension and pain that was resting on me, simulate gaiety and high spirits, and go and mingle amongst heartless people of whom I hated one half and despised nearly all the rest—to dance, and smile, and flirt, and attract—to exhibit myself, in a word, for the securing more surely the rich prize my would-be proprietor offered in exchange for me—all to gratify her love of pomp and wealth and vanity—she, the vain, selfish woman, who never experienced one throb of real love! She made me go to the last ball of the season; she chaperoned me, and paraded me, and showed me off—as surely as ever a slave merchant did his Circassians and Georgians before the eyes of rich pashas! I danced with Lord Henry Mountrevor by Madam Vivian’s express desire; I promenaded the conservatory with him; I sat with him behind bowers of orange-trees in blossom; with smiles I listened to his protestations of admiration; I gave him every artful encouragement that a ball-room coquette uses to capture a golden prize in matrimony—and I gave him a flower from my bouquet at parting, I remember—a rose—a white rose—and he kissed it, and placed it in his coat, to exhibit its withered remains to me for a week after! Winnie, do you know what day it was—the day that I danced out the close of the last ball of the

season with Lord Mountrevor? It was the twenty-ninth of July, eighteen hundred and——

“The day—the day that——” broke from Winnie’s lips involuntarily, in the shock of the moment.

“The day—the morning—the hour when Albert Gardiner lay dying amongst strangers in a strange land,” Lady Mildred said, slowly; “and when I discovered the truth afterwards, bitterly as I hated myself, there were two others whom I hated still worse—Madam Vivian and Lord Henry Mountrevor. I hated every one in the world but my cousin Stephen—my poor, dear, old, kind-hearted Stephen—who came with the tears running down his cheeks, calling me his ‘poor bereaved, desolate little Millie’! His sympathy saved me from going mad or acting foolishly.”

“Oh, Lady Mildred, dear!” Winnie sobbed, in her generous sympathy feeling as if every grief of her own innocent, loving life were as nothing compared to the stormy vindictive misery of this proud, noble, misguided nature. “But Heaven helped you to forgive yourself and every one else for that unintentional wrong—if wrong it could be called, when no one meant cruelly to you, although it was so cruel; and towards Lord Mountrevor, of course, as you married him afterwards, you must have felt differently.”

“Miss Caerlyon,” said Lady Mildred, briefly, “as you say, I became the wife of Lord Mountrevor afterwards, and the mother of his heir. Now, if you please, we will change the subject. This storm has affected me strangely, terrified me out of my self-possession and reticence; but I repose perfect confidence in your womanly honour and delicacy of feeling.”

“Of course you may,” responded Winnie, sorrowfully, fearing that she had offended her.

“I know I may,” said Lady Mountrevor, quietly; and then, as Winnie moved from her side to the window to recommence her anxious watching and listening, she put her arm around her, drew her towards her, and kissed her with a gentle cordiality that made Winnie’s heart beat fast with pleasure.

“I think one could make a friend of a woman like you,” the wealthy peeress said, with thoughtful sadness; “be that as it may, you can never be but an object of interest and liking to me, Winnie; at all events—whatever I am to you—after what you told me this night.” Her voice sank low and trembled audibly as she struggled passionately for control of her feelings. “I can never forget it, Winnie—I never shall; and I may be able yet,” she whispered, laying her cheek to

Winnie's, and wetting it with her tears, "to give you some days of happiness—some years of happiness, I hope—for the hours of regret and the tears you gave to—his—Albert Gardiner's memory."

She buried her face in her handkerchief for several minutes, and in the pause there again came across the monotonous roaring of the waters the short, sharply-defined booming sound. A terrible thought arose in Winnie's heart. She would fain have rushed to open doors or windows and braved the storm, to look or listen for the news that she dreaded; but she was unwilling to disturb Lady Mountrevor at the moment.

"Dear Winnie," Lady Mildred said, looking up with a calmer face, and a little of Mildred Tredennick's old caressing smile gleaming from her tear-wet eyes, "I have talked too much of myself, my life, my past. It is all over, all its brightness is gone, all its hopes were buried long ago. Now for a change, dear Winnie Caerlyon, I shall talk of the future—your future, my future, as far as I can hope for one—the future when Stephen Tredennick comes home, and—Hark! what is that?"

Again across the thundering of the surges came the sharp booming sound.

"I have heard it twice before," Winnie cried, clasping her hands. "Oh, Lady Mildred, it is a wreck! I was afraid of this all night.

"A wreck," Lady Mountrevor echoed, awe-struck—"a wreck near us here? Oh, what can we do? What can we do to help them?"

"Nothing," said Winnie, white with despair. "No vessel can hold out for an hour if she once gets near Tregarthen Bay. I often heard father say that no boat can get alongside. Sailors have no chance of life unless they are washed ashore on spars. We can do nothing but stand to see them die. There is the gun again! Oh, poor souls!"

"Let us wake up the servants—let us go out and see—offer rewards—do something!" Lady Mountrevor broke out, energetically.

The sudden excitement of her quick sympathies was as a counter-irritant, relieving and strengthening her unstrung fevered nerves.

"They are awake, I think," Winnie said, listening—"I hear footsteps on the stairs."

The footsteps came nearer, and a tremulous knock sounded

at the outer door of Lady Mildred's rooms. Presently old Llanyon's white head appeared against the dark background of velvet drapery.

"My lady, my lady," he cried, agitatedly, "I thought it right to come and tell you, my lady, that there's a large ship—a merchantman, they think—ashore on the Black Reef of Tregarthen!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

The first struggling light of the gray dawn was dimly revealing through the cold mists of the wild March morning the dreary expanse of the froth-whitened tossing water, the jagged glittering points of the Black Reef peering above the raging waves; but most noticeably of all, to the eyes of the score or two of watchers on the cliffs, did the faint gray haze cling around that dark mass with the torn remnants of sails and cordage beating idly and wildly about, and the splintered spars and masts lying helplessly with their heads submerged under the cruel waves that leaped and dashed over them in fierce mockery.

Whence she had come, or whither she was bound, no one knew; but there, on the Black Reef, beneath the frowning precipice of Tregarthen Head, on the wild Cornish coast, had the good ship found her doom.

"A hemmegrant ship her be, sir; an' 'bout fifteen hundred tons, I shud saay," one of the Coastguard men remarked to his officer.

"She's nothen o' the sort, John Richards," the boatswain retorted—"not by her build, as I can make out. 'Tes hard to say," he added to Lieutenant Caerlyon; "she be goin' to pieces hevery mennit."

"Has none of the cargo come ashore?" the officer asked.

"Not much, sir, except bar'ls, and chests of tay, and pieces of staves."

"An' not a soul left aboard o' her," John Richards put in.

"Ye'r a-talkin' of what 'e don't know nothen of," the boatswain said again, more sharply; "ef 'e've got heyes, man, and a glass, what kind o' use do 'e put 'em to? I see three men, not ten mennits ago, come in through the passage atween them flat rocks forrard theer, houldin' on to a spar, poor fellows! They must be a'most dead."

"Where have they got to, then?" Lieutenant Caerlyon asked. "It will be low tide in three hours; but there's not a shelf of rock above water now; and even at low water the rocks will be all covered in this storm, and no one can get to them. I am afraid, poor fellows, it's a black look-out from every point for them."

"Here be wimmin comin'! What do they want a-comin' in such a place?" the Coastguard boatswain, a bachelor of some forty-eight years' standing, remarked, crossly—the gentler sex, in Mr. Ned Boscawen's opinion, having no earthly right to appear in any place where their presence was not directly required. "Comin' up here, weth the wind blowin' their gowns an' shawls like balloons—it'll take 'em off their feet afore they knows wheer they are!"

Determined to give the adventurous females a smart rebuff if they ventured "to come clackin' weth their questions," as he phrased it, to him, Mr. Boscawen deigned to bestow no further notice on the two darkly-robed advancing figures. Lieutenant Caerlyon, steadying his glass against a field-hedge skirting the last cultivated stretch of land on the Head, heard nothing, saw nothing but the echoing roar of the thunder of the waves and the hissing sheets of flying spray, with that black dismantled heap lying so forlornly on her side, and the sharp black rocks beginning to show all around her in the ebbing tide.

"It'll carry out everything afloat belonging to her, too," he said, half aloud; "we can't even tell what cargo she had."

Suddenly he perceived Mr. Boscawen staring amazedly at something and touching his cap.

Wheeling round to discover the cause of the phenomenon of Mr. Boscawen's politeness, Lieutenant Caerlyon nearly dropped his glass at seeing his daughter Winnie's pale face at his elbow, and, leaning on her arm, Lady Mountrevor, wrapped in a mackintosh cloak.

"Your ladyship is very brave to come out here on such a morning, and at such an hour," he remarked, involuntarily, through sheer amazement, after replying to her brief but courteous greeting.

"Your daughter was not afraid to come—begged to be allowed to come—why should I fear, Lieutenant Caerlyon?" her ladyship said, quietly.

"Oh—but—Winnie," he said, coughing a little deprecatingly and smiling—"Winnie's more used to early hours and rough weather than you are, Lady Mountrevor. Winnie's

been out on the cliffs with me years ago, when she was a little girl—at three o'clock in the morning sometimes."

"Can no one tell anything about the unfortunate vessel, Mr. Caerlyon?" Lady Mountrevor asked, rather impatiently. "I came out to see if I could be of any use. Where are the poor people?"

"A few men were seen getting in by spars and such things some time since, my lady," he replied, "but we can discover nothing of them—nor can we reach them, I fear, even at low water."

"They must be under the Head, father!" Winnie cried, her white face reddening with excitement.

"Yes, but where, my dear? Half-drowned sailors could hardly cling to the face of the cliff," her father returned. "As soon as the tide turns, if our boat can be launched, we'll try and get out a bit to see where they are."

"Couldn't, sir—couldn't be done these twenty-four hours," Ned Boscawen interposed, gruffly, shutting up his glass with a snap.

"I doubt if it could," said the Lieutenant, sadly, shaking his head; "I fear, madam, the poor fellows have no chance."

"Must they be left to die, then?" Lady Mountrevor asked, shuddering. "Mr. Caerlyon, I wish to offer rewards, to encourage the men to try to save them. I will give fifty pounds to the first boat's crew of your men that goes out to try to rescue them—a hundred pounds if they are successful!"

"Lady Mountrevor," he said gravely, "you are very kind, but a thousand pounds would not tempt a man to fling away his life—as it would be flung away in any attempt to man a boat through such a sea as that for the next twenty-four hours; and long before that time those poor fellows must be washed away, or have died from cold and exposure, if they are not dead already."

"Father, they might hold on to those flat rocks—they are at high-water mark, you know," Winnie urged, "and they are a little sheltered from the beat of the waves, too."

"They may hold on, Winnie," her father replied, shaking his head; "but they can't climb up. We can't get a rope down, we can't reach them by a boat, and they must perish, child, as soon as the tide rises again."

"Would no one volunteer to go over the face of the cliff with a rope, Mr. Caerlyon?" inquired Lady Mountrevor, eagerly. "If you can discover that there are any survivors

beneath, I will give a hundred pounds to the man that goes down to them."

Lieutenant Caerlyon bowed.

"I will tell them what you say, Lady Mountrevor, but I am afraid the attempt will be useless, even if you can get them to make it. Tregarthen Head projects considerably, and below there is no foothold for anything but a gull, except at very low tide."

A quarter of an hour afterwards he came back.

"Madam," he said, "there is not a man amongst them would attempt it until the sea goes down; and it can not be ascertained that there are any survivors."

"But there may be survivors for all that, Winnie," Lady Mountrevor persisted, as they turned away together. "I shall not give up hoping—I shall make preparations to receive them, poor creatures! Oh, if we could save the lives of even one or two out of all belonging to that great vessel!"

Perhaps this was the first thoroughly unselfish work that Mildred, Lady Mountrevor, had found to do in her life, or rather that she had tried to do, and all that was best and noblest in her nature expanded beneath its influence. Hopeful light shone pleasantly in her eyes, hopeful colour glowed pleasantly in her cheeks, as she eagerly planned for the recovery, the consoling, comforting, and healing of a few poor wretched half-dead sailors. In her enthusiasm, in the pleasant warmth of benevolence, melting away the ice at her heart, she could have washed and clothed and fed with her own hands the wretchedest, most tattered, torn, wounded human creature which could be rescued from the waves, and rejoiced over him as if he had been a dear friend.

"Where are you going, Lady Mountrevor?" Winnie asked, pausing. "Will you let me stay with my father? I would rather stay here to see if anything can be done," she pleaded. "Please allow me. I cannot stay indoors. I cannot eat or drink. Let me stay here for a few hours, at least."

"You shall stay all day if you wish, and I will stay also," Lady Mountrevor rejoined, quickly, "but I must go and give some orders first at Tregarthen House."

"Orders at Tregarthen?" Winnie repeated, half mechanically.

Lady Mountrevor and Winnie were walking side by side up Mennacarthen Lane—just as Winnie had walked here eight years ago, in the bleak dawning of a wild March morning, by Stephen Tredennick's side—just as she was

walking with his proud, beautiful cousin now, she who had been haughty Mildred Tredennick then; and he—where was he now?

"I am going to have Tregarthen House prepared to receive those poor people, if they can be rescued," said Lady Mountrevor, hurrying faster. "Come, Winnie; we will order Mary Truscott and her old aunt to have blazing fires and plenty of hot water and aired beds and blankets. I know Stephen would wish it to be so."

"But—but he is not come home!" Winnie observed, staring a little wildly, as they entered the house.

"Stephen Tredennick come home! Certainly not! What are you thinking of?" asked Lady Mildred, in surprise. "You are not well, Winnie, after your sleepless, agitated night—poor child, your face is quite drawn and ghastly. Try not to think of the wreck for a few minutes, dear, and sit down by the fire and rest, and look at all the improvements I have been making."

"Yes, beautiful! You have made it look as if it had been always lived in and taken care of—everything so fresh and neat," Winnie said, languidly.

She sat down, weary and shivering, in a large chair in the oak-paneled dining-room, its woodwork, all newly polished, reflecting like mirrors in a thousand flashes of yellow light the leaping flame of the newly-kindled wood-fire, the rich ruddy glow of the velvety crimson and purple of the carpets and curtains; the tall yellow wax candles in the bronze candelabra, the white statuettes on brackets on either pier between the three windows, the books in their ivory tray—nay, even the three tall slender *jardinières* of purple majolica-ware, with their blooming clusters of white and purple hyacinths, each making the air heavy with fragrance—a beautiful, welcoming home like room, looking, as Winnie had said, as if it had been always lived in and taken care of, with not an item in its home luxuries overlooked by the sympathetic taste, the thoughtful mind, that had designed and perfected its furniture and accessories.

"Well, Winnie, what do you think of it?" asked Lady Mildred, coming back to the dining-room. "You must come all through the house with me and look at it, and then Mary Truscott will give us some breakfast. She makes coffee and griddle-cakes to perfection, as I have often proved on cold days when I was here looking after the workmen," she said to blushing, curtsying Mary, who considered haughty

Lady Mountrevor "the sweetest creecher of a lady—grand as she is—that you could find in England."

Like one in a dream Winnie followed Lady Mildred from room to room, as she drew back curtains, pulled up blinds, and exhibited the chintz and damask hangings, cheval glasses, French bedsteads, bath rooms, carpeted corridors and staircases of polished oak, the massive hall lamps, the statues, pictures, flowers, everything fresh, and furnished, and cleaned, and polished, painted, papered, varnished, stained, gilded, to the acme of the complete luxurious neatness of a well-appointed English old country house—nothing glaringly new or bright, everything warm, cosy, comfortable, inviting, needing only the additional brightness of living presences by the bright hearths and the glad blazing fires.

"This is just as Stephen would like to see it, I think. He will be so pleased with the old house," said Lady Mildred, cheerfully. "Only some outbuildings need repair now, and a new conservatory has to be finished; otherwise it is quite ready for its master, Winnie."

The girl did not offer a word; she was looking from the bay-window of the drawing-room across at the Head, and the stretch of boisterous foam-flecked water, dimly seen beyond the clouds of mist above the crashing breakers, and she shuddered violently.

"When may I go back to the wreck, Lady Mountrevor?"

"As soon as you have taken some breakfast—not before," replied Lady Mildred, decisively. "How you shiver, you poor little thing!" In the strength of her own splendid *physique*, imperially moulded, morally and physically, as she was, the young peeress looked down pityingly on the slender, frail, girlish form of the woman who was her junior in years as if she had been a weakly child. "You are not equal to much exertion, Winnie, I see that; your sleepless night has made you quite ill. I am stronger, I suppose," she added, her face clouding wearily as the memory of what that sleepless night had brought to her knowledge arose freshly on her mind.

But she did not remember that to strong, fiery, passionate natures like hers, that rebel wildly against the grief which is yet crushing their very soul, it is possible to fling aside for a time the very memory of the weary burden that the meek ones gird around them to bear patiently, gently, uncomplainingly to the grave.

Besides, it was no new grief that she had learned; and gentle Winnie Caerlyon's touch had been only soothing to

the old, hidden wound throbbing so feverishly beneath Lady Mountrevor's cold, statuesque beauty.

"You have not seen half my improvements; you can have no idea of the state that this old house was in when I took it in hand," she went on, kindly intent on rousing Winnie from what she considered to be merely nervous depression, as she poured out a fragrant cup of hot coffee and buttered the crisp, hot griddle-cakes, at the other side of the little oval table which she had wheeled up to Winnie's chair. "Don't you think this oblong table perfection for a *tete-a-tete* breakfast?" her ladyship pursued, smiling, as she ladled the thick, golden, scalded cream into Winnie's cup. "I do; I chose it in Plymouth purposely for cousin Stephen."

"And yourself, I suppose?" Winnie said, smiling faintly.

"Myself!" Lady Mildred exclaimed, raising her brows. "I could scarcely expect to enjoy *tete-a-tete* breakfasts with Captain Tredennick for the term of my natural life, Miss Caerlyon. You forget that that is the privileged enjoyment of Lord Henry Mountrevor."

"I beg your pardon," said Winnie, colouring in some distress, both at the mistake and the hostile flush and tone of voice of Lord Mountrevor's young wife.

"I bought it for the same people that I bought those two velvet chairs for," Lady Mildred went on, forcing her cheerful mood back again. "This is a *tete-a-tete* service—this Sevres; I got it in my pet *bric-a-brac* shop in Paris. I got it for Stephen and his *chatelaine*—and I mean to tell him so."

"His—his——" stammered Winnie, bewildered for a moment. "Oh, I know! I did not——"

"His *chatelaine*—wife—lady—Tregarthen's mistress— whoever she may be," said Lady Mildred, laughing. "Don't you think she ought to find a happy home here, Winnie? Don't you think life could flow on very peacefully here, with a woman whom Stephen Tredennick loved, and who loved him?"

"It could not flow on otherwise," Winnie replied, her voice shaking a little.

A long pause ensued. Secretly Lady Mildred waited for Winnie to speak; secretly Winnie longed to speak, but dared not.

"You must have had a great deal of trouble to have everything restored and the house so perfectly appointed," the latter remarked, taking refuge at length in commonplaces. "I

almost feared that Tregarthen House would have fallen into ruins before this, when I was in America."

"You remembered Tregarthen House then?" questioned Lady Mildred, with a rather curious inflexion in her voice. "It was a pleasure—the greatest pleasure I have known for years, Winnie—to be able to make my dear cousin Stephen some return for his years of kindness—brotherly, patient kindness to me."

"Kindness?" Winnie broke out, looking up with a fevered flash of light and colour coming to her eyes and cheeks. "I thought I had been told years ago that ——"

"That what?"

"That Stephen Tredennick —— I beg your pardon again; it does not matter, and is no concern of mine." She interrupted herself brusquely, and, locking her nervous, twitching hands with convulsive tightness in her lap, she turned away her face, watching Tregarthen Head and its encircling awful mists of ocean spray.

"I think, Winnie," said Lady Mildred, with quiet reproach, "you need not fear to tell me any thought of yours, no matter how strange or incorrect," she added, meaningly.

"It does not matter—indeed it does not matter—it is of no consequence whatever," Winnie persisted, rising unconsciously in her agitation and walking away from the table.

A half-melancholy smile followed her from Mildred Mountrevor's keen watchful eyes.

"You poor little simple-hearted thing!" she said, inwardly. "As if you could conceal it—and as if I did not know it long ago! As if I would not do more for Stephen's sake—dear brother Stephen, the only brother I ever had in loving reality—as if I would not have aided his happiness by every means in my power long ago, when I thought my own happiness as near and as sure as his!"

Sadly, and half enviously, she gazed at the slender black-robed figure standing in the cold gray light of the window—the girl on whom she had bestowed her half-scornful compassion in the years gone by, when her own youth and love and happiness were at their zenith of bloom and brightness—this poor, pale-faced, gentle little woman.

CHAPTER XXV.

"It is a most extraordinary thing for you to attempt, my dear," Madam had said, with a rather cold smile, when Lady Mountrevor and Winnie, wrapped in hoods and thick shawls, had entered her breakfast-room to explain their absence, and inform her of their intentions for the rest of the day. "You are very courageous, I suppose, and it is really very good of you, Lady Mountrevor, to take such an interest in those poor unhappy creatures. Can I do anything, can I send anything up to Tregarthen, Mildred? I will with pleasure."

"Thank you, Madam, no," her niece replied, coldly. "Tregarthen House is well supplied."

"And do you really think that any of them have escaped? Hardly, I should imagine, poor creatures;" and Madam's little dimpled hand fluttered coquettishly amongst the hanging white laces of her purple satin under-sleeves, as with a smile, she offered a dainty breakfast-cup of her favourite green tea to her visitors.

"We breakfasted an hour since, thank you, again," said Lady Mildred, more frigidly, and drawing Winnie away. "We but came to explain our absence, and apologize for it, Madam. I am old enough to consider an effort to save a poor, half-dead sailor's life of more importance than a comfortable breakfast at the usual nine o'clock hour—and I believe Miss Winnie Caerlyon shares my peculiarity. We shall not be home to dinner. Good morning, Madam!"

"Good morning, Lady Mountrevor!" returned Madam, offended, and taking up the newspaper.

"Good morning, Madam!" said Winnie.

Madam rustled the paper very loudly, held the sheet before her face, and made no reply.

"Do I really think that any of them have escaped!" Lady Mountrevor repeated indignantly, as she and Winnie made their way along the wild, bleak cliff road. "I prefer to make sure of the fact with my own eyes and ears, at all events, instead of sitting sipping tea and enjoying raised pies and buttered toast and reading the paper, whilst my fellow-creatures are perishing in a watery grave within a mile of my doors."

You do not call that selfishness—horrible, cold-blooded selfishness?" she said, sharply, to Winnie.

"Madam would not be selfish if those she loved were in trouble or danger, I am sure," answered Winnie. "She does not feel her sympathy excited, as yours is, about poor strangers whom she never saw or heard of. If you or—or her nephew, Captain Tredennick, were in trouble or danger, she would act very differently. It is a lack of sympathy."

"I should say so, decidedly!" Lady Mildred exclaimed, indignantly. "I wonder if any one has been saved. I wonder if they know anything about the vessel yet. What are they all doing down there on the shore, Winnie? Will you ask some one you know—a Coastguard or some one else—to tell us?" she said impatiently. "Are they letting people die whilst they save casks and barrels?"

But John Richards, of whom Winnie made inquiries, informed Lady Mountrevor, with a desponding shake of his head, that there was no one saved.

"Leastways, my lady, ther be no one but fower drowned dead corpses—all white and gashly to look at, my lady—'e daren't go anear of 'em."

"But the men that were seen coming in?" Lady Mildred asked, eagerly.

"Bless 'e, my lady—I means," John Richards replied, with a more desponding shake of the head, "they couldn't a-come a-nigh the foot o' the Head; they be dead corpses long ago, my lady."

But John Richards seemed fated to make incorrect statements this morning, and burly Ned Boscawen to hear and reprimand him.

"Who tould of 'e that they was dead?" he demanded of his subordinate, with much acrimony. "Beg 'er pardon, my lady, they was seen alive by young Will Treglyn haafe an hour ago, one on 'em waivin' a white clath or flag—for help, I s'pose, poor fellows! The young Will Treglyn he see 'em when he climbed out as far as he could on that spur of rock below ther."

"And are you doing nothing to help them?" Lady Mildred asked, with flashing eyes. "Those people below there are risking their lives after the rubbish from the wreck, while the crew perish within sight of aid!"

"We are a savin' of the cargo as comes in," Ned Boscawen retorted, doggedly; "but that doesn't say as how men can swem haafe a mile through breakers. We can't do nothen

tell the tide is full agen, and then maybe the cutter can get out a bit."

"The tide will not be out yet for an hour nearly, and you must wait until it is full again!" Winnie said, laying her thin little hand, like a flake of snow, entreatingly, on the boatswain's rough blue sleeve. "Oh, Ned, can nothing be done before that?"

"'Tesn't no manner o' use in 'e bein' asken of that of me?" responded Ned, testily. "Can e' fly over the cliff like a gull? Can e' swem like a fish? Then, ef e' can't, 'e can't do nothen, I tell 'e, Miss Winnie, tell full tide."

"Does no one know anything about the vessel—even her name, cargo—anything?" Lady Mildred inquired again.

"She's bleeved to be a merchantman—her cargo's tea and such like, as far as we can tell—we've seen no name, 'cept her cargo's London bound," Ned replied, briefly, edging away from her ladyship's inquiries.

Disconsolately irresolute, they stood where the gruff boatswain had left them, in the scant shelter of a high bank—Winnie looking sadly at the raging waves, high and fierce as ever, Lady Mildred, in angry despairing impatience, watching the eager groups on the shore below, between which and the Head intervened the furious seething water and the rocks of the Black Reef, when they both noticed the scattered groups of men, women, and boys running together, beckoning and gesticulating in excitement over something which had just been snatched from the returning sweep of the waves—something which had floated in from the wreck, now lying half bottom upwards, her broken masts smashing away in splinters; and emerging from the excited crowd around the salvage came John Richards, the blundering, simple-minded Coastguard, running from the strip of beach up the cliff path.

Winnie, seeing him coming, rushed forward to meet him. Her heart seemed to pause beneath the weight of the presentiment that was the herald of that swift comer's awful news.

"What is it, John Richards? What have they found?"

John Richards, charging past her in blind confusion and dismay, pulled up short, with a white face and gasping utterance.

"Lor' bless 'e! Aw, my dear—aw, Miss Winnie—how are e' to tell of et to um—the poor lady, her ladyship theer, an' th'ould Madam Vivian? Aw, 'tes saad! Miss Winnie, my

dear, 'tes the Cappun's ship—her name's on the stern they've pulled in! Aw, Miss Winnie, 'tes the Cappun of the *Chittoor* as haave been lost in this wisht night!" and John Richards, gulping down sobs, was obliged to pause for breath.

For one minute the white angry ocean, the bleak bare land, seemed to whirl and fade away before Winifred Caerlyon's eyes, and the icy breath of the sea-mists to enter within her and freeze every warm pulse of life into stillness; but the calm presence of mind, the ability to rule and guide the breaking heart and burning brain, which is the merciful gift of those frail, gentle womanly natures which always cover so strong and yet so meek a soul, did not desert her now. There was something to be done yet; by-and-by would be time enough for agony and despair.

"Lady Mountrevor, dear Lady Mountrevor"—she put her slender arms around the tall Juno-like form—"they have learned the name of the ship."

"What is it?" Lady Mildred asked, in momentary amazement. "Winnie, why do you look so? Oh, Winnie, Winnie," she cried, with an imploring shriek of terror and dismay, "do I know the name? Winnie, answer me! Oh, Stephen, Stephen! Is it cousin Stephen's? Winnie, I don't believe it. They are mistaken. It could not be—it could not be!" she went on, wildly. "What are they talking of? The merchantman, *Chittoor*? Nonsense, nonsense, I tell you!"

Fiercely and angrily, in her grief and bewilderment, she caught Winnie's arm, and at reckless speed hurried her down the steep path to the strip of beach and the excited crowd below. Respectfully, and with muttered exclamations of sympathy, the people fell back as she approached, and two Cornish miners held up to the cold morning light a dripping piece of wood, the stern and name-board of a ship, with lengths of splintered timbers attached.

"What is the name? Can you read it, Winnie? It is all scratched and battered—no one can make it out!" Lady Mildred cried, in desperation, against the evidence of her senses.

By Winnie Caerlyon, looking with tearless eyes on those large white and gilded letters on a dark painted background, they could be deciphered as easily as the letters of a child's alphabet, as easily as a message in a well-known writing, as surely, as accurately as the dread words of a death-warrant. She did not doubt or disbelieve; it was death—Stephen Tre-

dennick's death that she was looking on—that stormy sea his grave, that black dismantled hulk lying on Tregarthen Reef his only coffin, if indeed his dead body was not the sport of those fierce leaping seething billows.

Perhaps he had been drowned early in the night, and those fierce waves had been beating on that dear, noble, kindly face, so fixed and white, and on the broad, strong breast whose kindly heart was stilled for ever, all through the dreadful hours of darkness? Perhaps that was why she had felt that unearthly terror of the cruel storm? Perhaps that was why her blood had run cold at each crash of the breakers, each shriek of the tempest? Because they had been murdering Stephen Tredennick!

Death had been abroad in the wild night—death within and without! Death-dirges were ringing through the air—death-cries coming on each sweeping blast of the storm! Had not some one else died? Albert Gardiner was dead, and Stephen Tredennick was dead—how many had died? Was everybody dying? How many more were to die?

In a kind of delirious trance she had sunk on her knees on the wet sand, staring vacantly at the name lettered so clearly that it seemed to burn through her sight and write its fatal message on her brain, thinking of the cruel, tossing waves—tossing, tossing, all through the long, dark, pitiless hours—tossing Something which had become their prey—while she—oh, merciful Heaven!—sat sheltered from the storm, warmly wrapped, on a couch by a bright fire! The horror of the thought seemed to benumb her faculties, as she uttered slowly, as if her lips refused to pronounce the words—

“*Chittoor*—the *Chittoor*—Lady Mildred!”

“The *Chittoor*! Is it the *Chittoor* that is lying over there? Winnie, is it?” Lady Mildred cried. “But they escaped—some escaped—Stephen may have escaped! Some were saved—Stephen may be amongst them! Perhaps he may—don't you think Stephen escaped, Winnie?” she reiterated, piteously.

“I don't know,” Winnie replied, in a stunned, dreary way; “we must ask the survivors—we must reach them first.”

“Yes—yes, at once!” Lady Mildred cried, eagerly. “I will give a hundred guineas to the first man who will reach them by the cliffs!”

There was eager disputing, clamoring, persuading, dissuading—women crying, men vociferating—amongst the group for several minutes, and at the height of the discussion Win-

nie Caerlyon put her hand on John Richards's arm again and drew him aside.

It required repeated directions to reach willing John's dull understanding, but he finally set off at a steady trot, shaking his head dismally and muttering hopelessly to himself the while.

"Ropes—strong new ropes—there are none long or strong enough here. I sent him to tell my father what we are going to do," Winnie said, in reply to Lady Mildred's questioning; "there are two or three new coils always in the boat-house."

"But those cowardly creatures," Lady Mildred exclaimed, passionately, dashing away the blinding tears from her eyes—"we cannot make them go down the cliffs—no reward will make them attempt it! A brave sailor would go in a moment! Oh, what shall we do—what shall we do? The tide is on the turn and no chance of rescue! Winnie, Winnie, tell me what are we to do? Winnie, it is Stephen Tredennick who is perhaps down there amongst those few half-drowned, half-starved men! Oh, dear Stephen, what shall I do?" she wrung her hands and sobbed aloud.

"We shall get news very soon, please Heaven—very soon we shall know the truth, Lady Mildred."

"How—how? They are afraid to venture, the miserable wretches!" Lady Mildred cried, with a wail of despair.

"They are only poor miners and a few fisher-lads, besides the Coastguard men; and Tregarthen Head is a tremendous height above the Reef," Winnie Caerlyon explained. "But don't fear, Lady Mildred; I know one who will go, if no one else will."

"Who?" she asked, looking round eagerly. But Winnie Caerlyon turned away without a reply. Presently she perceived the distant forms of men hurrying from the Coastguard station with the coils of rope.

"Now, Lady Mildred," she called, "here are the ropes. Offer your reward, and let us see who will volunteer. Will any of you risk your life to save the lives of the poor fellows on the Black Reef?" Winnie asked, walking in amongst the crowd. "Will any one of you men volunteer to go over the cliff with a rope?"

A kind of shuddering silence ran through the group, each man looking into his neighbour's face.

"A hundred guineas to him who does it, my men!" Lady Mildred said, passionately, trying to compel herself to coax

and entreat, when she would fain have ordered instant obedience. "Is there not one that will try? You know whose ship is the one lost and broken over there on the rocks—you know who I would fain dare hope is amongst the few who have escaped—you knew him as well as I," she said; and, in spite of pride and fierce impatience, she burst into tears before them. "If you will not try to save Captain Stephen Tredennick—Tredennick of Tregarthen—for his own sake, for your memory of him, my entreaty is, I fear, useless. Five hundred pounds to him who saves him!"

"I'll do it, my lady!" The brave words came from the youngest man in the crowd—a mere lad in years—curly-haired Will Treglyn, a poor crippled miner's only son.

"Oh, not you, Will, not you, and your poor father with no one else!" the women cried.

"I'll do my best, I tell 'e!" cried sturdy Will. "I'll have a try for et, anyhow."

"Oh, Will, your poor mother—'twell be her death!" the women chorused again

"Is his mother here?" demanded Lady Mildred, turning on the frightened group so that they quailed into muttering silence. "Then hold your tongues, and let the brave fellow alone!"

Winnie Caerlyon grasped his hand and pressed it tightly.

"God bless you, Willie Treglyn!" she said fervently. "Your mother may well be proud of you."

"It's madness—madness, I tell e' sir," Ned Boscawen grumbled to his officer. "Will Treglyn may go swinging over th' Head for a few feet, but ef the rope don't cut and smesh hem, below theer, he'll haave to be hauled up as wise as he went down."

The rope was around young Will's waist, and Lady Mildred, standing by his side, was uttering promises and encouragement, whilst Winnie gave him some brandy from the large flask which they had brought with them, secured it safely at his waistbelt, adjusted the ropes with her little fingers so that they should not gall him, and was shaking his hand and bidding him "God speed," when, warned by an alarmed officious neighbour of her boy's intention, Molly Treglyn, bareheaded and in her scanty cotton gown, came running up the road to the Head, and in a minute had him in her arms, shrieking, sobbing, and protesting that not for twice five hundred—ten times five hundred pounds would she stand to look at her child's murder—tearing at the ropes,

kissing him, scolding him violently, crying over him, and giving him smart blows and shakes alternately.

"Mother, do 'e be quiet!" brave young Will said, trying to wrest himself away from her hold. "I be goin' only to see ef et can be done. They'll haul me up as soon as ever I give the segnal to 'em. Do 'e be quiet, mother—and thenk," he whispered—"her ladyship's goin' to gev e' a hunnerd pound, mother; ef I only try to go down a bit! 'Tesn't nothen, I tell e'—I've gone nigh as bad places for gull's eggs," said Will, drawing on his imagination. "'Twon't take me very long neither. A hunnerd pound, mother! 'Twell set 'e and fayther up for the rest of 'eer lives!"

"An wheer'll 'e be when we've the hunnerd pound? Aw, Willie, my laad!" cried his mother, pitifully.

A band of men formed; the great rope wound in and out around their arms as they stood one behind the other. Out crept young Will Treglyn to the crumbling edge of the precipice. Holding their breaths, the men watched him drop himself over the edge, while his mother, sitting on the ground with staring eyeballs, moaned with every breath from the anguish of her suspense. Waist, shoulders, head, slowly slipped down out of sight, and the Cornish miners commenced cautiously to "pay out" the rope.

Slowly, carefully, with jerks from below, the rope went down, down; then came a jerk, a sudden strain; then more rope was paid out, followed by a terrible strain, a violent jerk that threw one of the rope-holders on his face, then came continued jerks, and a terrible strain again, and then a long pause.

"Somethen haave happened to un," the men muttered; "there hain't a hunnerd foot of rope paid out yet."

There was a long pause, with only straining and jerking at the rope, and then, after another long pause, without waiting for the signal, the men commenced to pull up. Slowly up came the rope and its burden again, and, with a cheer, and with renewed outcries and tears from his mother at the sight of her "laad" dripping with sea-water, his hands and face covered with blood, and one arm hanging useless, broken, at his side, they hauled Will Treglyn on to the sod.

"'Twas they breakers," said poor Will, in his Cornish dialect. "They gev' un a blaw here, and a blaw theer, an' a-flung me here, an' twisted they rope around they rocks; an' a tried to clear et, an' a cuddent—a cuddent ef a was to try haafe a day. An' then a got a-top ev a grut rock, an' a tried

to hould on, an' a was pitched clane agen the cliff, an' a arm smeshed; an' then a cuddent do nothen moore. I be sorry, my lady," said poor young Will, earnestly, with his left hand wiping away the blood-trickling from his brows. "Ef ma arm wasn't broken, I'd go down again en a mennit—that a would! They poor fellows is alive—they see me, an' one on 'em gev un a shout; an' a wish a could go down to 'em agen!"

"No, no, my poor fellow; you have done what you could," said Lady Mildred. "Go up to Tregarthen House, Mrs. Treglyn, for whatever you may require. Tell the house-keeper you were sent by me, and get the doctor for your brave son at once. And now what is to be done?" she asked of those around, looking at each pallid, frightened face in gloomy despair.

"Lady Mildred, Lady Mildred"—the little figure by her side moved closer, and the upturned earnest eyes glittered like jewels beneath the blue-veined temples—"don't fear yet—there's one will go yet! Don't fear—there's one that will go surely yet!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

"This storm affects my nerves dreadfully," Madam said, peevishly. "I cannot think what is the matter with me. Are you sùre the *portiere* is drawn, Trewhella? The room feels full of draughts. Stir up the fire, please, and draw that banner-screen out farther."

"Will you have your woolwork, Madam?" Miss Trewhella asked in a most sympathetic voice. "It do try the nerves, Madam, awful! I reely feel myself as if my head was quite light, and my heart flutterin' like a bird, reely, Madam. I'm sùre it's no wonder you should be nervous. It is well for her ladyship to be as strong and as brisk as she is—reely amazing, isn't it, Madam, to see her?"

"Her ladyship is under the impression that she has a remarkably excitable, impressionable, nervous system," said Madam, rather spitefully. "To see her this morning one would imagine that she was used to living on the cliffs and being out in all weathers, like little Winnie Caerlyon."

Miss Trewhella tittered, and then finished off with a little cough.

"It's just a fancy of her ladyship's, as you say, Madam, running about as if she was born and bred like poor little Miss Winnie. Up at Tregarthen, before daylight this mornin', I saw them goin' off, and Miss Winnie with a black poplin skirt of her ladyship's on her—must have been a mile too long—he—he—he! Reely—I beg your pardon, Madam—I thought I should have burst out laughing when I saw it on her. It's very nice and kind of her ladyship; I dare say she'll keep Miss Winnie at Tregarthen, sewing and doing up things now until the Captain comes home. Miss Winnie is so clever at making things up nice, and her ladyship do seem to have took such a wonderful fancy to her."

There was a sly sneer in Miss Trewhella's furtive glance at her mistress, as the old lady pettishly took off her glasses, declaring that they made her eyes ache, and pushed the basket of wools away.

"I wonder if Miss Winnie intends being kinder to her old friend, Mr. Pascoe, now, than she used before she went away," Madam said, apparently studying the braiding of her dress. "It is time for Miss Winnie to think of getting settled. She is eight-and-twenty, I believe."

"Eight-and-twenty, Madam!" returned Miss Trewhella, in a very high-pitched tone. "Nigher four-and-thirty! Mr. Pascoe, her own step-mother's cousin, told me nine years ago that he believed his cousin Winnie, as he calls her, was near three-and-twenty."

"Oh, nonsense," said Madam, with a satirical smile. The worthy Miss Trewhella's strenuous efforts at the arithmetic of addition as applied to other women's ages, and the arithmetic of subtraction as applied to her own, were well known to her.

"Well, whatever age she is, Madam—whether she's what I say, or seven or eight-and-twenty as you say," Miss Trewhella continued, shaking her head very much and tightening her lips in a surprising manner—"she've no notion of Mr. Pascoe, Madam. Oh, de-ar, no! They get very high notions in America, Madam. One's as good as another, over there, I hear. There's no one too good, or too fine, or too grand, for a young lady to think of setting her cap at over there! Mr. Pascoe, the purser—her own step-mother's cousin—ain't half good enough for Miss Winnie, since she's been and got the high, presuming Yankee notions! She wasn't across the door—

step last night when I noticed it, Madam—reely. Now isn't that surprising? Quite the air of being somebody, you know, Madam, and so dressed up! Surprising, Madam! She had nothing less than splendid *gros grain* on her dress, Madam; and her crape was nine shillings a yard if it was a penny! Reely you'd think, to see her with Lady Mountrevor, that she was an old acquaintance of her ladyship's, and a titled lady, too—reely surprising! And she all night in her ladyship's room, too! They're the greatest friends."

"Trewhella, please don't talk so much—you make my head ache," her mistress said, irritably.

"Oh, I beg pardon, Madam—I was only trying to amuse you, seeing as you weren't able to work," Miss Trewhella explained, in her most touchingly humble and reproachful voice. "Of course it's nothing to me what Miss Caerlyon aspires to or doesn't aspire to. I shouldn't 'ave presumed to mention Miss Caerlyon's sayings, or doings, or goings on in any manner, only I thought it would be amusing to you, Madam, this terrible dreary day, and your nerves so bad."

The worthy creature's voice subsided into an injured whine, and with a melancholy sigh she glided out of her mistress's presence.

The white jewelled hands trembled amongst the Berlin wools, and tangled them together; and the stormy flush which those who offended her knew so well coloured all Madam Vivian's pale, ivory-like complexion.

"Are they all in league against me?" she whispered, passionately clenching her fingers—"my nephew Stephen, that haughty, obstinate woman, Mildred Mountrevor, and Winnie Caerlyon? Am I to be as nothing, if a man's folly, a reckless, self-willed woman's whim, and a presuming young person's intentions are set on achieving a thing? How dare she! How dare Mildred Mountrevor make light of my wishes and my authority in my own house! How dare Winnie Caerlyon dream of it! There is yet time," said Madam, growing feverish with anger, and beginning to pace the room; "I shall put an end to this matter, one way or another. Winifred Caerlyon shall know what she is daring if she ventures to interfere with my plans for the future of Stephen Tredennick."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Winnie, you shall not attempt it! Winnie, my dear, you are mad to think of it! Winnie, my child, would you have your father stand by to see you murdered? My poor little girl, the first blow of those waves would knock your life out in an instant!"

But all she said was—"Let me go. I am not afraid—not afraid, if I must die, so long as I can save all those below! Father, father, their lives are in our hands! Don't forbid me. Lady Mildred, speak to him!"

"Lor' bless 'e, Miss Winnie, don't 'e think of doin' such like," a stout fisherman interposed. "I'll try! Let me try, Lieutenant."

"No!" Winnie said, putting him back. "You can hold the rope. You are a heavy man—there might be more danger for you; and you have a wife and children depending on you also. I will go. Father, you will not say 'No.' It is my duty. Father, you will not refuse to let me risk my life for the lives of others, will you? You would risk your own freely."

"Winnie, my child," he cried, with tears, "don't talk so! I can't say 'No'—I can't say 'Yes'—I can't stand by to see you killed! My girl, you'd never accomplish such a terrible feat—you needn't think of it."

"Let me try." She kissed his face, and murmured a few words in his ear. "All I have is for you and mamma and the children, father; you will find papers in my desk;" and the grave, reserved, unemotional father shook with sobs, and turned away to hide from the sight of his gentle daughter's going to her doom.

"Winnie dear—Winnie love!" Lady Mildred cried, choking with agitation. "Winnie, if anything happens to you, I shall feel myself a murderess for the rest of my life! My brave girl, Heaven keep you! I'll pray for you here on my knees, Winnie, until I see your face again. Kiss me, dear."

Never again in Tolgooth, or Tregarthen, or in the whole country-side, did any one fear or regard Mildred, Lady Mountrevor, as a cold-hearted, haughty, unapproachable

woman, after that dreadful day on Tregarthen Head. "She was like one of ourselves," they said, referring to her womanly excitement, fear, grief, and affection. Those whom she had fiercely scolded forgave her when she entreated them as those on whose aid she depended—those whom she imperiously ordered about obeyed her, and would have done so without even the promises she lavished of reward. The women pitied her, and shed tears for her distracted grief and excitement at her beloved cousin's possibly untimely end; they liked her and admired her for her passionate, remorseful tenderness to poor little Winnie Caerlyon.

"Poor little Miss Winnie"—the poor Lieutenant's daughter—who, they said, was going to her doom—to meet the risk of almost certain death! For Winnie Caerlyon, with her slender black-robed figure, her little white hands, her uncovered head, with its wealth of beautiful brown hair, her meek white face, was taking the place which brave young Will Treglyn had been forced to abandon—was fastening the rope around her poor little fragile girlish waist, and going over Tregarthen Head, down amongst the blinding sheets of spray and the thundering breakers of the Black Reef—down the face of a deep precipitous overhanging cliff, to attempt the rescue of the survivors of the *Chittoor*.

Those who stood beside her to see her make the terrible essay said afterwards that they could not have told how it was they permitted her to go. Blank amazement had stupified unbelief, enthusiastic admiration of her courage had semi-paralysed their faculties, until she stood ready for the descent, looking up to Heaven in prayer on the very verge of Tregarthen Head.

Her father flung himself on his face with a groan of horror, and a deadly shiver went through the frames of the rough men standing by. Lady Mildred crept forward, her limbs seeming to totter beneath her.

"This once before you go—brave soul, dear girl!" she said, weeping. "Listen, Winnie—I must tell you—I should like you to know—now," she gasped, looking wildly at Winnie, as at one who stood half within the dread portals of eternity. "You asked me something this morning about Stephen? Winnie—Winnie—do you not know? He loved you, dear, long ago! I believe, if he is yet alive, that he loves you still! He always loved you, Winnie!"

The answering smile on the face of the girl to whom she spoke was as the pathetic smile of the calm, passionless dead.

And then Winnie Caerlyn, hidden from mortal sight, went down alone to wrestle with an awful fate.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

With the thundering voices of the waters in her ears, wailing despair, shrieking vengeance, roaring threats of destruction, all around her the mingling of the clouds of sky and sea—cold, leaden-hued, misty clouds above, cold, white spray-clouds below; with clenched hands, contracted limbs, distended, watching eyes; feeling the awful swaying hither and thither of the rope, and the occasional striking of projections of rock—as one in a stupor dimly feels the roughest arousing movements—Winnie Caerlyn went down, down, swiftly down, until the terrible jagged, black rocks beneath showed like demon forms crouching darkly under the concealment of white surf, preparing—oh, so easily and speedily!—to rend and tear asunder the body of their frail young victim—to beat out and deface in hideous disfigurement every trace of womanly fairness in that slender form swaying hither and thither amidst wind and spray, like a frail reed; down, down, swinging in mid-air here where the shelving cliff overhangs, gliding swiftly with outstretched, numbed, bleeding hands by a smooth perpendicular face there, guiding the rope with a dull concentration of all her faculties on each jutting spur and crag, lest they strike her into insensibility or kill her in a moment; down, down, and the blinding sheets of spray drench her through and through; down further, and the great waves fling their crests over her head; down still, nearer those cruel black rocks—they are waiting for her—she cannot avoid them!—down, till the swaying rope brings her to the great serrated edges, the horrible *chevaux de frise* of splintered granite. The waves stun her—blind her—beat her; the waves would fain tear her away, to torture and suffocate amidst the rending iron arms, the black whirlpools of the Black Reef; but one fierce rock Titan holds her fast, and, with the white, bare arms, all bruised and torn, clinging to his rough breast, Winnie sits secure in the cradling hollow of a great black boulder, while the hissing waves can only writhe around her feet and bespatter her dripping hair, washed and beaten half out of

its tight coils, whilst she cries aloud in thankfulness to Heaven.

Her senses have returned now—clearly, vividly. She can remember, and think, and plan, and decide. Her excited brain, her bounding pulses, her rejoicing soul, would carry her through worse dangers than the past ones ten times over. She can recall the position of the rocks, and the scraps of sandy, weed-grown banks left bare by the tide, as she remembered them eight years ago. She can slip down this great rock, wade over that bank, mount that jagged shelving piece there, which leads to the hollowed recesses in that projecting gable of rock above high-water mark. She must climb up there by the fringing growth of sea-weed—up there, where the survivors of the *Chittoor* lie.

Is there no sight, no sound, to tell if they are there—if anything is to reward her search? She cannot shout or signal them; she can do nothing but patiently grope, and feel, and stumble, and climb inch by inch over her painful way, holding by rocks, clinging to sea-weed, reaching over deep pools, stooping and holding her breath under each torrent of foaming water from each crash of the breakers. A little way further she proceeds, the thick white froth covering her black drenched clothes, her long, dripping, clinging tresses like snow, and then the little figure—looking scarcely human, save for the great dark, longing, passionate eyes looking out of the white face, and the black shining hair streaming from the waves—clings to the oily, swaying sea-weeds, and tries to clamber up.

But her swollen, bleeding hands will not hold the slippery fringes tightly—they break away again and again from her hands; the cold is benumbing her, the waves are deafening and blinding her; and at length, with a piercing scream of agonised impatience, pain, and despair, she falls prostrate on the rocks below, gazing up at the hidden recesses beyond her sight and reach. She gazes up, pondering in her dizzy bewilderment, cold, and weakness, whether she must die there, after all—gazes up, and sees, looking down upon her, over the ledges of rock and sea-weed, Stephen Tredennick's face.

He sees her, disbelieving what he sees; he stares, pushing back his wet hair from his haggard face with a tremor of fear that the delirium of cold, hunger, and exhaustion is stealing over his senses. He sees her rise to her feet, and point to the rope around her waist, and the gentle, womanly lips seem to utter words, though he can hear no voice. And then other

faces look down upon her, and the dark, cavernous rocks of Tregarthen Head re-echo with wild shouts—hoarse, gasping hurrahs, and frantic screams of gladness, relief, hope, and welcome.

They fling themselves down, scramble down, tumble down in any manner—eight gaunt, wounded, pallid, half-naked men, with their captain, Stephen Tredennick—and they almost overwhelm, in their wild gratitude, delight, and admiration, the poor, little, trembling, womanly form that the sea has well-nigh overwhelmed already.

“A woman! A woman! Come with a rope! Oh, may the Lord bless her brave heart! A little lass come with the rope to save us, captain! How did ye get to us? Give us a touch o’ your hand! Cut and bleeding! Cut sore and deep, your bonny little hands! Lord bless you! Who are you? Are you a spirit or a woman?”

Death staring them in the face had not wrung a tear from their eyes, or broken the brave spirits in those sinewy, weather-beaten frames; but before the sight of a woman’s heroic daring and devotedness, risking her weak life for theirs, they sobbed and groaned, kissing her bleeding hands, wringing the weight of moisture from her dripping clothes, blessing her, and begging for her name, for their wives’ and mothers’ prayers to the end of their lives.

And Stephen Tredennick re-echoed their passionate demand.

“Who are you? Who are you?”

She unfastened the flat tin case of brandy strapped to her side before she answered him, and held it to a suffering-looking man’s lips who was crouching, bent double with pain.

“The Captain first, thank you—Lord love you!” poor Jack said, faintly putting the flask aside for which his sunken eyes glistened.

“No, no, Symons my poor fellow!” And Stephen Tredennick’s hand along with Winnie’s guided the reviving draught to the man’s pinched blue lips. In a moment the magnetism of touch realized the truth of what the Captain had persuaded himself was the wild delusion of his perturbed imagination. “Is it—is it Winnie Caerlyon?” he asked, his worn, weather-beaten face lighting up with a flash of incredulous delight and anxiety. “Am I wrong? You were Winnie Caerlyon when I knew you years ago?”

“I am Winifred Caerlyon, sir,” she said, turning away a

little from the ardent hope and pleasure in the kind dark eyes, so sunken and encircled with lines.

It was the same words, the same meek tones and gesture, the same gentle little white wistful face, that had appealed to the brave sailor's tender heart the first time he ever saw and spoke to her, patiently sheltering herself, after her patroness's abrupt dismissal from her presence, in the old servants' room; it was something like the same dress too, this long clinging gown of black, her beautiful long hair streaming below her waist, half wet, half blown into wild curls. Yes; she was unchanged after all these years, little Winnie—his dear little Winnie Caerlyon—whom he had loved and pitied from the first moment, as a strong, kind, gentle-hearted man loves a fair, winning, delicate little child, until the deep, peculiar, passionate womanly nature touched the manly heart, awaking interest, admiration, and chivalrous pity.

In the long, long years that had ensued, in lonely night watches and solitary musings on bygone things, Stephen Tredennick had told himself with a sigh that he had had one chance of his old romantic fancy's being realized, one chance of that dear woman-love and woman-presence in the old home at Tregarthen which he had looked forward to, sometimes with aching, longing, and desire—one chance of the sweet home joys which a sailor loves so dearly and quits so often—and that he had lost this one chance—thrown it away—let it slip through his careless fingers, and it would never more be his.

Those long-ago hopes and wishes, so long buried that they had become but a pleasantly sad memory, were aroused afresh in the hearing of that voice, at the sight of the dear little womanly face he had never once hoped to see again.

"I might have known it," he said, looking earnestly at her. "I did know it; but I could not believe it."

And now, guided by Winnie to the safe place for ascent, the rescued men—each one revived by a draught of the powerful stimulant from the case-bottle—directed, encouraged, and prepared for the long perilous upward journey, were brought up one by one—some quite safely, others meeting with accidents of a slight nature on the way; and the shouts of rejoicing that greeted each arrival could be heard above the roar of the waters baffled of their prey.

The last of the eight sailors had gone up out of their sight, and Stephen Tredennick and Winnie Caerlyon were left alone—alone—shut out from all the world—beyond the reach,

for the time, of all earthly presences or influences—that slender rope, which would come down with its weighted slip-knots presently, swaying in the wind, their sole mode of communication with the land where their fellow-creatures lived—alone on the Black Reef of Tregarthen, with hundreds of feet of frowning crags above them, and behind them the rising tide of the wild sea, and the black, battered hulk of the ill-fated *Chittoor*.

“Winnie, I thought you were in America,” he said, gazing at her, almost doubting the possibility of her identity. “How did you come here to save our lives?”

“I have been at home for a week, sir,” she answered, simply; “and I came down because poor Will Treglyn, who attempted to descend first, was badly hurt. There was no one else. I was not afraid—not much—and my weight was light on the rope.”

“No one else but you!” he echoed, with kindling eyes. “No one else with your pure heart and brave spirit, I am sure; but they might have found some one else whose weight might have been heavier on the rope, but whose bodily frame would have been better able to endure exposure and hardship than this poor little one,” he said, with a melancholy smile, trying to shelter the drenched shivering form. “You knew what ship’s crew it was that were wrecked?”

“Yes, the stern, with the name painted on it, was washed in this morning.”

“Yes, yes,” he said, his brow darkening sadly; “my gallant old *Chittoor*. I’ll never tread a plank of her again—my poor old beauty!” the sailor groaned, his voice shaking, and the tears blinding his eyes as he turned to gaze at the shapeless heap of tempest-riven planks, beating to atoms on the sharp rocks. “I never thought to part company from her like that! I feel as if I had done wrong, to be standing here safe and sound, and my brave ship, that has carried me through wind and weather these ten years and more, gone to her doom! But no mortal power could have saved her. I never left her until she was parting amidships at five o’clock this morning—the second mate and myself and poor Symons. He was hurt—one of his ribs crushed, I think—and we had to hold him on the couple of planks and hencoops we had lashed together.”

“And where are all the rest?” Winnie asked, fearfully.

“I cannot tell,” Stephen Tredennick said, gloomily. “One boat’s crew pushed off as soon as she struck—at three o’clock

—and were swamped in a few minutes; they went down before my eyes—ten or eleven men. The next boat was stove in as they tried to launch her. Then another boat's crew started—fifteen, I think—and we lost sight of them in the darkness in an instant; they were lost too, I dare say. And then, when the ship was going to pieces, the rest jumped over with spars, oars, or anything they could lay hold of. Six of them got in here before the mate, Symons, and myself—the rest all perished. Fifty of my men and my ship gone—the *Chittoor* and nearly all my poor fellows! We were short of hands, too, or there would have been twelve more gone; and I—I was spared!" he groaned, bitterly.

"Captain Tredennick," Winnie said, gravely, "are you displeased with Heaven for sparing your life?"

"No," he returned, moodily, leaning on the wet rock beside her, "I am not ungrateful to Heaven or to you; but, if I could have saved my men and my ship, I would have been willing never to see the sun shine as it is shining over us now!"

"I think," objected Winnie, striving to speak calmly with the greatest difficulty, "that you ought to remember—before you speak so—what the loss of your life would be to others—what it would be to see you washed in like—like—one of the poor fellows' corpses this morning. What would it be to your aunt—the poor old lady—Madam Vivian—to Lady Mountrevor, who loves you as if you were her own brother?"

"True enough, Winnie," he returned, but without raising his head; "but, my dear, you don't know how badly a sailor feels such a thing as that which has happened to me."

"I think I can imagine it, Captain Tredennick," she said, gently, and spoke never a word more in her mute sympathy, standing patiently beside him, whilst the cold March wind chilled her through every vein and nerve, and the cold salt moisture dripped icily from her wet hair and dress over her shuddering limbs.

"Here is the rope at last!" he exclaimed rousing himself from his painful thoughts. "My poor child, you must be frozen!"

He took the great double noose to slip it over her shoulders; but the poor little benumbed hands held his in resistance.

"Captain Tredennick, you must go first—you must!" she said, passionately. "They are waiting, longing every moment to see your face. Poor Lady Mildred is waiting, pray-

ing, hoping, and dreading; you must go first—oh, you must—oh, please leave me behind until the next time!” poor Winnie entreated, with convulsive sobs, feeling her strength going, her limbs failing, an icy chill helplessness creeping over her very soul, it seemed to her, and dreading lest Stephen Tredennick’s determination should prevail, and that after all he might be left to death and danger.

“And leave you!” he cried, his face flushing. “How many more lives are to be lost, and I saved? Your life, too,—wet, chilled, benumbed, fainting almost as you are! Winnie, what do you think of my manhood that you could propose such a brutally selfish course to me?”

“Oh, I cannot—I cannot—I will not leave you here!” she said, her broken voice rising to a faint scream of despairing entreaty, as he adjusted the ropes around her, and lifted her in his arms to the flat rock, over which the rising tide was beginning to ripple, from which the ascent was to be made. “Do not make me go first! I would rather die! And I can’t hold the rope, my arms are so stiff,” she added, unaware, in her grief and anxiety, of the admission she had made of her total unfitness to be left by herself.

“No, you cannot,” he affirmed, in perplexity; “you would be dashed against the cliff, and your limbs broken, cramped as you are. What am I to do?”

One moment’s consideration and then he stepped on to the rock beside her, and, unloosing the rope from her waist, and with sailor dexterity forming with it a second slip-knot, he replaced the first one round Winnie, and the second beneath his own shoulders; and then he took the poor little fragile, shivering form in his strong arms.

“We will go up together, Winnie.

“Oh, we can’t!” she cried, in terror. “The rope will break, and you will be killed!”

“And you will not, I suppose?” he rejoined, smiling pityingly and tenderly. “We must risk it, Winnie, dear. I do not believe we could reach the top alone in safety. I saw how it was when Symons went up—he got some terrible blows, poor fellow! I believe the risk for your life is less by my going with you; and, if we are to die, little girl,” said he, huskily, straining her close to his breast, “we will die together.”

In the face of this ending of her young life and her faithful love together, poor little Winnie Caerlyon turned with a smile to Stephen Tredennick for the first time—a happy

smile, suffusing her pallid face, and brightening her sunken, haggard eyes.

"And, if we are to live—if we are to live—if God will be so good," he resumed, looking up to Heaven reverently, "we will live together. Winnie, my darling, shall we? Our lives belong to each other from this day, I think—do they not, my little girl? Look up at me, my brave little darling—who risked death for me so willingly, and say that, if we live, you will be mine on earth, and, if we die, you will be mine in Heaven!"

Her sight was fading, her senses were failing, her voice had sunk to the whisper of weakness.

"I am dying," she thought; "I may promise for the world beyond the grave;" and, with her face resting beneath his, the sweet dark eyes gazing upon him, the touch of her cold lips to his cheek, Winnie Caerlyon said, "I will." And then the fond light of the loving eyes went out in darkness, and the last flicker of life in the white face faded away.

CHAPTER XXIX.

There was an agitated group around Miss Trewhella, stretched in a graceful position of helpless abandonment on the sofa in the housekeeper's room, her arms flung out at either side, her eyes closed.

The housemaid was vigorously rubbing the right hand, the kitchenmaid the left; whilst Mrs. Grose held a huge square bottle of salts to her nose, and made speedy preparations for drenching the fainting lady with a large jugful of icy-cold water, when she slowly raised her eyelids, and faintly gasped—

"A—a—gl-gl-ass—wi-wine, ple-ase!"

Old Llanyon, the butler, who brought the wine, regarding Miss Trewhella's emotion with the eye of disfavor which he turned upon almost every deed and act of that estimable person's, stood watching her sipping the wine and groaning and sipping again, closing her eyes, rousing herself up to groan again, and then evincing returning symptoms of a relapse into insensibility, until he could endure it no longer.

"What's the matter weth the wommun?" he demanded, irately. "Be she goin' to faint, or be she goin' to recover, or what be she agoin' to do?"

“Oh, whisht ’e, Mr. Llanyon,” the housemaid cried, reproachfully. “We were a-sittin’ here, Mrs. Grose an’ me, making up th’ accounts of the things for the dinner-party, when Miss Trewhella she comes in wild-like, weth her hands up; and she fell down here in a heap ’longside Mrs. Grose; and Mrs. Grose she let the ink-bottle fall, and ——”

“What’s the matter weth her, I want to know?” Llanyon demanded, more angrily. “Who’s dead, or who’s buried, or whet’s the takin’ weth her that she’s sprankin’ and groanin’ there as ef she were out of the ’sylum?”

The sufferer’s insensibility suddenly terminated at these insulting words.

“Thank ’evin!” Miss Trewhella cried, sitting bolt upright so suddenly that her attendants retreated in dismay, and even hardy old Llanyon drew back a step. “Thank ’evin, I say, that I’ve not got the hearts of some people, that would eat, and drink, and go in and out, and make insulting remarks upon defenceless creatures lying in dead faints,” said Miss Trewhella, standing up very stiff and straight, and “fixing” old Llanyon with her fiery hard black eyes, “when every one belonging to the family as they belongs to was lying dead and drowned, shipwrecked and murdered!” Miss Trewhella went on, gurgling and gasping, and leaning her head back against the sharp edge of a shelf in an affecting manner. “Thank ’evin that my feelings, when I hear tell of corpses stretched out dead and drowned of the family that I serves, and serves faithful, these seventeen years and a quarter—that my feelings is, Mr. Llanyon, that my heart stops beatin’, and my blood runs cold in my veins, and I haven’t the power to help myself from looking like one out of the ’sylum, or out of the madhouse, Mr. Llanyon!”

“For Heaven’s sake, whet are ’e a-talkin’ of, ’Lizabeth Trewhella?” old Llanyon asked, fearfully. “Who is dead belonging to the family?”

“It’s time for you to ask,” Miss Trewhella retorted, vengefully; “perhaps, Mr. Llanyon, you mightn’t have been so ready with your insults, an’ your abuse, an’ your calling of names to a respectable girl, when her mind’s loaded with distress, and her head ready to split to think of what’s before her!”

“Oh, ’Lizabeth,” Mrs. Grose implored, “do ’e tell us—there’s a good girl—like a dear! What have happened, ’Lizabeth? Who’s dead?”

“Mrs. Grose, you’ve a heart to feel for me, if you don’t

feel for me on all occasions as I could wish," responded Miss Trehwella. "I've dreadful and awful news for you, Mrs. Grose—there's dreadful news for the family, Mrs. Grose—and my heart's nigh breaking! I was always one to feel things worse than any one else! Oh, Mrs. Grose—Maria Jane, my dear," broke out Miss Trehwella, abandoning the sharp edge of the shelf for the sympathising housemaid's shoulder, and becoming alarmingly hysterical, "how can I tell 'e! Don't 'e ask me—I can't speak of it! The Captain—the poor Captain—he's dead—killed—drowned—a dead corpse down there on—the—the seashore! Maria Jane, hold me up—I'm go-ing!"

"Es et Cappun Tredennick as is dead?" old Llanyon almost shouted, in grief and horror. "'Lizabeth Trehwella, 'e er not goin' to tell me of et. The Cappun—my gallant gentleman! Cappun Stephen, that I remember as a handsome young fellow—my brave, fine, noble gentleman! Es et drowned dead 'er manes?" he demanded, his dialect becoming broader each instant, in his terrible agitation. "Was it our Cappun's ship that was lost?"

At the moment a bell rang sharply.

"Oh; good lor," he groaned, sitting down, in helpless dismay, "whet are us to do? How are us to tell poor Madam?"

"I'm to tell her, Mister Llanyon, if you please," Miss Trehwella said, witheringly; "I'm to be the one—and the only one fit and proper to tell my lady, after seventeen years and a quarter. I'm aware of the proper and only method of breaking afflicting intelligence, Mister Llanyon," she went on, with contemptuous self-possession. "It isn't likely that persons as have no proper feeling, nor knowledge of the weakness of a delicate person's nerves, could attempt to meddle with such a situation. Perhaps you would be kind enough to give me another spoonful—the least spoonful—of wine, Mrs. Grose. I don't know as I shall be able to get through it without fainting again."

"Oh, Providence, look down on us!" old Llanyon groaned, quite unconvinced by Miss Trehwella's self-possessed assurances. "These es a dark day. It'll be the death of the poor mistress, the death of the master, you may lay—an' theer's an end to the ould house an' the Tredennicks o' Tregarthen!"

* * * * *

The blinds were half drawn, and the warm rich glow of the fire-light illuminated the large room, with its soft green dra-

peries, its black polished woods, and dead gold frames and mouldings, more brightly and pleasantly than the dull, cold gray light and occasional gleams of glaring sunlight of the cold wild March day outside. Madam Vivian lay on her little velvet *chaise longue*, drawn between the fire and the window. She had been dozing, for her crimson Indian shawl, with its gold bordering, lay across her feet and her cashmere morning-robe, and a copy of *Eliot's Essays*, bound in cream coloured calf and gold, lay half-open beside her, dropped from her languid hand.

"Oh, Trewhella!" she said, looking surprised—"I rang for Llanyon! Why do you attend the drawing-room bell? I want some iced lemonade. I hope the refrigerator is in proper order—the last was not very successful. I am very thirsty, and a little feverish, I think, and have taken a fancy to have some. There are lemons, of course, in the store-room?"

Even Elizabeth Trewhella's selfish importance and vulgar eagerness for the excitement of telling her dreadful news gave way to silent fear and pity for her mistress's terrible unconsciousness and her interest about the trifles of her daily life, whilst the sword of a Damocles trembled as it were to the fall that would pierce her to the heart.

"Oh, yes, Madam, there are lemons! But you'll excuse me, Madam, if I can't think of anything but the dreadful grief that's come on us all!" she burst out, rather bungling her "proper and only method." "I've been in a dead faint since I heard it, with the cook and housemaid supporting of me, and I wouldn't let one come near you but myself, Madam, though I was hardly able to walk upstairs, for fear they would frighten you to death!"

"What is it? What has happened?" Madam cried, struggling to her feet. "What ails you, Trewhella? You are frightening me to death! Oh, it is Lady Mildred! Something has happened to her on the cliffs!"

"Oh, it isn't Lady Mildred, Madam, but it's on the cliffs the dreadful accident has happened," Trewhella gasped, making a terrifying display of wringing her hands, swaying from side to side, and rolling her head about distractedly. "It isn't that it's an accident exactly, but—but—it happened last night in the wreck, Madam. Little we thought, and we all in our beds!"

"Of what? What happened at the wreck?" Madam Vivian asked, slowly, her face fading into an ashen-gray deadly hue.

"Oh, Madam, dear, don't take on so dreadful!" Miss Trewhella cried, frantically snatching at an essence-bottle and a fan. "Sit down in your chair and let me give you a drop of sherry—just a spoonful, Madam; you're like death, and I know, to my sorrow, what it is to have weak nerves."

"Trewhella!" the old lady called, striking her hand fiercely on the table beside her, "speak out this instant—without a word of. prevarication! What happened at the wreck? What is it that is so dreadful as to frighten me to death? Whose ship was it?"

She whispered the last words hoarsely in her anguish, and Trewhella, over-awed and unnerved, burst into noisy sobs and tears.

"I can't tell you, Madam! It's—it's too—too dreadful! I said it would break your heart—and Llanyon abusing and scolding of me for—for fainting, as if I could help it when—when I heard of the poor—dear—Captain—dead and drowned—oh, oh, oh!"

The next instant Miss Trewhella's shrieks, in good earnest, were resounding through the house. Madam Vivian's limbs had given way beneath her, and, whilst her maid was screaming, she had fallen heavily to the floor.

CHAPTER XXX.

Madam Vivian's maid summoned assistance, and was relieved to find that her mistress was not dead. The shock was only temporary in its effect on her system, yet sound and strong from her magnificent constitution; and, after a little while, she sat up, pallid, haggard, trembling, an agony of bereaved pain thrilling her through and through, and making her white lips parched, and her tearless eyes burn like fire. But she was strong to suffer, determined, proud, and self-willed yet.

"Bring me a warm mantle and bonnet," she said to her maid; and, a momentary hesitation on her part evoking a haughtily-impatient glance and an imperious "Do you hear?" Miss Trewhella was obliged, in amazement and alarm, speedily to obey the command.

"Give me your arm, Llanyon," she said to her old faithful man-servant. "Your nerves render you unfit for anything,"

she remarked, coldly scornful as she turned away from her maid's proffered assistance. "I don't want to hear people shrieking and screaming in my ears. My sorrow is my own, and no one else can share it," the proud old woman said, repulsing the idea of others' endeavouring to pity or understand her heart-griefs.

Poor old Llanyon was afraid to betray his own bitter regret, and kept wiping away the tears that trickled down his withered cheeks silently and cautiously with his right hand, while he respectfully held the left hand and arm to assist his mistress as they hurried on through the cold March wind and bleak flitting sunshine towards Tregarthen Head and the ominous crowd gathered on its summit.

"What are they all doing up there? What are they all about?" she demanded, impatient and wrathful in her suppressed pain.

"They—they—I suppose they're looking at—oh, Madam, Madam!" The old man broke down with a choking sob.

"Hush, hush!" his mistress said, clutching him fiercely by the arm. "Command yourself, I tell you! Do you wish me to break down now? Do you think that I am not making myself keep up until——"

Words failed her, but her indomitable will pushed forward her trembling limbs, all unused to any exercise; and, fighting with her throbbing heart, her distressed lungs, her aching muscles, she walked swiftly up the hill against the wind, without a pause for breath, until she reached the outskirts of the thick crowd.

No one had noticed her coming—it hardly noticed her now, that absorbed, talking, gesticulating, exclaiming, staring, pushing, struggling crowd of men, women, boys, and girls, all looking seaward.

"They're comin'! They're comin'!"

The words passed from mouth to mouth, at first in a confused hum of eager voices, gradually rising in a tide of excitement, until a great wave of roaring cheers, shouts, and outcries swelled above the crashing of the rough waves below; and, in spite of themselves, Madam Vivian and her old servant found themselves borne in and hurried forward, jostled and pushed by people who seemed half mad with anxiety and eagerness, towards the summit of the Head.

"What are they about? How dare they push me in this manner? What is all the cheering for? Ask them, Llanyon. Do you hear? What are you staring at, like the rest?"

"What es et all about? What are ye cheering for?" Llanyon asked a man rushing past. "Do ye see wheer ye're going? Look at Madam Vivian, man!"

"I beg eer pardon, my lady," the man said, touching his cap, but pushing on, with a broad grin on his flushed face, all the time—"they're cheering for the sailors—she have saaved 'em! Miss Winnie Caerlyon—that little white-faced maid as you wuddent think could clem a wall—she's been and gone down that cliff—raight over the Head, my lady!" He restrained himself with evident difficulty until he got a yard past Madam Vivian, and then his throat opened in another cheer, joining the chorus of cheers that fairly deafened the ear.

"The sailors! The sailors! The sailors and Winnie Caerlyon!" Madam cried aloud, in the rage of her grief and uncertainty. "Why did I come here? Llanyon, take me out of this yelling crowd, and bring me some respectable person—Lieutenant Caerlyon—any one that I can ask a question of. Why did I come? Listen to their cheers! How dare they? How dare they, if—if—the Captain is not safe! Llanyon, do you hear me? This yelling and shouting will drive me mad!"

But poor old Llanyon's efforts to release himself and his mistress from the pressure of the crowd were somewhat unavailing, and at length, worn out with struggling, emotion, and excitement, Madam was obliged to pause, leaning against one of the rough upright granite boulders that strewed the Head.

"Here she is! Here she is! Bray-vo!" roared the crowd. "Did 'e ever hear tell o' the like? The little maid—the Leftenant's daughter!"

A crimson spot was on Madam's white cheeks, an angry glitter in her tearless eyes, though her breath came in sobs.

"Did I come here to listen to Winnie Caerlyon's wonderful achievements?" she said aloud, in scorn. "Will you answer me, please," she asked of a miner near her—"if anybody is of importance beside Miss Winnie Caerlyon—have the crew of the *Chittoor* been saved?"

"'Es, Madam," he answered—"some ov 'em—she saaved 'em—the young maid—the Leftenant's daughter—have 'e heard tell, Madam?"

"Will you answer me properly?" Madam Vivian said, almost frenzied. "What is Winnie Caerlyon to me? How

dare you! Where is the Captain of the *Chittoor* while you are yelling over the sailors and Winnie Caerlyon?"

Abashed and frightened by her anger, the poor "kibble lander" from Tolgooth mines could only point his finger towards the sea.

"Theer, Madam—him and Winnie Caerlyon!"

"Him and Winnie Caerlyon!" Madam shrieked, feeling that a few minutes more of this agonised suspense and confusion would of a surety drive her senses astray, when the crowd caught the words, and re-echoed them in stormy shouts of rejoicing.

"Him and Winnie Caerlyon! Captain Tredennick an' the Lieutenant's daughter! Lor' bless 'em! Here they are!"

In his exultation, relief, and delight old Llanyon found himself, regardless of every rule of propriety and etiquette, dragging his mistress forward, and ere Madam could pause to question or rebuke again, she was standing beside the holders of the rope, who, with sweating brows and muscles strained like cordage, were gradually drawing it up. Presently before her eyes—between her and the stretch of tossing gray sea, the wild white manes of the rushing swirling waves, and the lowering sullen mists—as if they had arisen from the ocean depths, she saw two figures.

She saw them, and, amidst her unspeakable joy and gladness, a sharp spasm contracted her heart. Stephen Tredennick, her beloved nephew, whose face she thought she never more would see, standing, tall, erect, and strong, on the earth, amongst living men, was before her; but close beneath his was a white soft womanly face, and tightly clasped to his breast a slender, yielding, helpless woman's form.

"Stephen—Stephen, my boy!" Madam broke forth in a tremulous cry with outstretched arms, her affection putting aside all else.

But he never saw or heard her; he responded to his cousin Mildred's glad fond welcome hastily and tenderly, but he never looked a few feet beyond, where stood his aunt, Madam Vivian.

"Oh, Mildred, I am afraid she is hurt!" he said, unclasping the silent, nerveless figure, and kneeling beside it on the sod. "She is quite insensible! Oh, Mildred, it has cost her her life!"

His face and voice were full of anguish; he heeded nothing else but the object of his grief.

"And it is for this," Madam Vivian exclaimed, in bitter-

ness of spirit, "that Stephen Tredennick has returned to his home!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

The fatal storm of that wild March morning had long passed away, the bright sunshine fretted with molten silver all the great blue shield of ocean, the warm southerly breeze blew soft over Tregarthen Head, stirring the summer grass growing green and deep in sheltered hollows, and the summer dews fell softly on the daisied sod of the shipwrecked sailors' graves in Trewillian churchyard.

The weight of regret and sorrow that their death had laid so heavily on the kind heart of their Captain had been lightened, it is true, for the second crew of fifteen which had quitted the sinking ship, after unspeakable hardship and danger, had battled triumphantly with wind and sea through the terrible hours of darkness, and at day-break found themselves eight miles off, driving in on a smooth lee-shore. The boat was stove in as they went aground, but the men all escaped with life, and, making their way to Tregarthen, the whole number of the saved—three-and-twenty—were lodged, fed, and cared for—some in Tregarthen House itself, some in the village—until they were able to travel to London and receive their wages from the merchants with whom Captain Tredennick was in partnership.

The ship and cargo were fully insured, and the owners had sustained no loss; but with the wreck of his beloved *Chittoor* had ended Stephen Tredennick's seafaring life.

"I knew every plank in her deck, every scratch and mark; it seems to me as if I knew every rope and seam in her canvas, and I don't feel as if I should care to begin learning such things all over again," he said, despondently, to Lady Mountrevor; "besides—besides, Millie, you know, I could not go away anywhere now, not if my daily bread depended on it!"

"No, no, of course not," she replied.

They were speaking in undertones, and the faces of both were downcast and weary.

"Mildred, isn't she any better?"

He had asked the question so often during these weeks

of sorrowful anxiety, and she had had so little variation for reply, that her lips had grown tired, and her heart despairing, in the accustomed sorrowful answer, "She is no better, Stephen."

Lady Mildred's brilliant eyes darkened with tears now, as she slightly changed the formula of her response.

"Stephen dear, I am afraid that she will never be any better. There is no use in denying it. The doctors think so, too."

"She" over whom the dreary fiat was uttered was lying in the adjoining chamber, a large airy pleasant room on the first floor in Tregarthen House, surrounded by all that love and care could desire or wealth purchase. The downy satin coverlet and snowy linen on the beautiful little silk-draped French bed, the noiseless carpets, the bouquets of flowers, the little fountain of fresh delicious perfume, with its tiny jet of cool spray and its twinkle of silvery drops, the superb crimson strawberries and hot-house peaches, with their crystal dishes resting on ice; the ebony reading-stand, with its open magazines and sheets of engravings—all that love and wealth could give her was hers ere she could ask or want; but all gifts and endeavours and achievements stopped short here in this luxurious shaded room, with its dainty satin-covered couch, fit for a French *marquise*.

The spacious, elegant chamber, with its tinted draperies and rose-strewn carpet, its flowers, and fruit, and pictures, and ornaments, was after all but an invalid's narrow world—a luxurious, carefully-guarded, silent, shadowy prison, from which fond, sad hearts and tender hands could not set her free, into which they could not bring one wild fresh breath, of health and strength; they could not set her on her feet amongst the early summer flowers and the waving summer trees, out on the grassy lawns and pleasant shady paths, to rejoice as they did in the breeze and the sunshine of May, and the song of the lark, whose trills of ecstasy for light and life and love floated into the quiet chamber on the breath of summer air that stirred the white transparent curtains about her bed—the downy bed and pillows, cambric-trimmed, lace-edged, smooth, snowy-white, and scented, on which lay helplessly an aching head and powerless, crippled limbs.

"Oh, my poor little Winnie," groaned Stephen Tredennick, "is this all the return she is to receive at my hands—stricken down in her youth, with nothing but the prospect of years of suffering—a long, lingering death before her?"

"But, Stephen," his cousin said, gently—she had become

very gentle and womanly and kind of late, this imperious, restless, unhappy wife of Lord Mountrevor—"there were days only a month ago when we thought that she would not even have those years of life, the suffering of which I fervently trust time may alleviate in some degree, and love and care can brighten a little also. Even now Doctor Lake is of opinion that she will not suffer acute pain, except at intervals, although he will not say anything about her recovery of the use of her limbs. The strain on her nervous system has affected her spine, he says, as well as the rheumatic fever—"

"Oh, don't, Mildred—I can't bear to hear it!"

He writhed with the agony of sensitive pain for the sufferings of others—beloved, weak, helpless creatures—which affects some of the bravest masculine natures so strangely, in contradistinction to a woman's self-possessed endurance under the like trial.

"But I must speak to you Stephen," Lady Mildred recommenced unwillingly, after an interval of silence. "You know Lord Mountrevor has written again; and although I gave him ample explanations, he says he cannot quite understand my prolonged absence." Her lip curled, and a cold, haughty smile hardened her face. "He wishes to see the child, too, I believe; indeed that is, I dare say, the principal reason of his requesting my return."

"No, no, Millie," Stephen Tredennick said, earnestly—"don't say that, my dear. I believe in my heart that your husband longs to see your face again for your own dear sake. He is not a stock or a stone, Mildred; and he was passionately in love with you when he married you. Give him his due—be just to him, Mildred, at least, and acknowledge he did care for you very deeply, though you did not care for him."

"Well?" she questioned, with a flicker of a cold smile.

"Well," her cousin returned, gravely, "is there nothing in that to make you feel kindly toward the man who felt love for you, and must have felt keen pain at your coldness?"

"No, Stephen," Lady Mountrevor answered, frigidly, "there is not."

"He is the father of your first-born and only child, Mildred," honest Stephen urged, his kind heart aching at the necessity for his pleading; "the child whom you love as well as he ought to form one bond at least between you."

"I do not love the child," she returned, her handsome face growing rigid in proud, cold obstinacy.

"Then, Mildred, my dear cousin," Stephen Tredennick

said, "you show me plainly whose is the fault, whose is the sin in this most miserable separation of a man from the wife and child that he loves—of a woman from the husband that she vowed to cling to as long as they both should live—of the poor little innocent child that would love both his parents if he were allowed, and who is worse than orphaned—with an unloving mother and a father hundreds of miles away!"

The simple, earnest, severely-kind words, spoken from the depths of a heart that she knew to be true and generous, and full of brotherly love for her, touched Mildred Mountrevor to the depths of her wayward soul.

"Cousin Stephen," she said, her hardness breaking down, "I do not want to be cold and unkind and unnatural; but—oh, you do not know all!"

"I know whither your wifely duty should lead you, my poor dear cousin," he said tenderly. "You cannot shirk it without wrong to yourself and the man you have married. I know where your parental duty should lead you—towards your poor little neglected boy. Duty, Mildred, duty in the sight of man and Heaven—let happiness and pleasure go where they will!"

"Stephen, I'll do my best—do my duty—I will!" Lady Mildred said suddenly and passionately. "You shall never have to reproach me so again!"

"Reproach you, my dear Mildred—my dear sister," he returned, hastily—"you who have been an angel of goodness and kindness and generosity to me! My dear, I only think that, if poor Henry Mountrevor received but one-half of the thoughtful affection and attention you lavish on me, I should have the happiness of seeing you, my dear, a beloved wife in a peaceful, happy home."

"Never!" she exclaimed, shortly and quitted the room as she spoke. Half an hour after she entered the room again.

"There," she said, abruptly,—“I have written now. I am going to obey you—to do my duty—to be a pattern wife, a model peeress amongst all the model peeresses of England!"

Stephen Tredennick could hardly restrain a smile.

"You are the same abrupt, impulsive, self-willed Millie as ever!" he said, pleasantly. "I am glad of it; but Mildred, what shall I do—what will she do without you?"

"I don't know," replied Mildred, gloomily. "I must leave her to the tender mercies of Miss Trewhella, I suppose, with Madam visiting her once a week, and telling her how grate-

ful she ought to be for all the gifts and blessings her kind friends have showered upon her."

Stephen Tredennick's brow grew dark.

"Winnie knows us better than to mind that," he muttered.

"And you must never come up here then, you know," Lady Mildred pursued, getting into one of her irritable and malicious moods—"at least, unless when you escort Madam up from Roseworthy. She is in a terrible state of mind about the frightful violation of the proprieties which you constantly perpetrate by your visits here. Even the presence of her ladyship, Mildred Mountrevor, your worshipful cousin, a peeress, and matron to boot, is scarcely sufficient excuse for your outraging the *convenances* by visiting that poor little dying girl in there!"

Her ladyship, Mildred Mountrevor, had talked herself into a reckless passion by this time, and, taking all that she said for terrible earnest, as simple-minded men will do at the outpourings of a woman's angry tongue, poor Stephen Tredennick sat pale and stunned beneath this new and calamitous aspect of affairs.

"Oh, Mildred," he said, imploringly, "what am I to do? If I had the right—"

He had spoken without heeding his words, but the quick start and involuntary glance of his cousin's eyes revealed a meaning and a way scarcely suggested as yet by his own thoughts.

"Mildred, I will have it," he said, suddenly, his whole face brightening and flushing in the glow of his resolution.

"What, Stephen?" she asked, softly.

"The right, the best right in the world to take care of her, to stay with her and cheer her, and nurse her, my poor little girl!" he said, falteringly, though his eyes shone with hopeful light. "I have a right—the best right in the world; and I will make it mine before all the world, that would shut me out of her presence, and keep me away from her, my poor little suffering Winnie!"

"Oh, Stephen, my dear Stephen," Lady Mildred cried, compassion and admiration struggling for the mastery with her, "it is like you! But the sacrifice—oh, Stephen, the terrible sacrifice of your life!"

"Mildred," he said, in grave reproof, "what did Winnie Caerlyon think of her sacrifice? Would you have her braver, truer, more generous than I, even—even," he repeated tenderly, "if I did not love her, if she were not—Heaven

bless her and pity her!—the most faithful love ever a man had, my poor little Winnie?”

Mildred, Lady Mountrevor, being a person fiercely opposed to “gushing,” did not shed tears or make any pitying outcry over poor Stephen Tredennick’s mournful love-story, in its past, present, and future aspects, but she sat very still for a few minutes, then coughed violently, and said she must have dropped her handkerchief somewhere.

“Then—Stephen—you are—what are you going to do?” she asked, confusedly, gazing at him in the same half-pleased, half-despairing way.

“There are not many preliminaries or ceremonies to arrange for, Mildred,” he answered, sadly smiling—“only to tell her. You will, dear cousin?”

“Yes—yes,” Lady Mildred said, hurriedly; “but, oh, Stephen, you forget—Madam Vivian!”

Lady Mountrevor confessed afterwards that in all her life-long knowledge of her cousin Stephen she never saw him assume the real, hard, immovably-haughty, iron-willed Tredennick look but once, and that was in this moment of his reply to her startled reminder.

“I shall be sorry, Mildred,” he said, “if aunt Vivian attempts any opposition in this matter—very sorry indeed.” That was all.

“But if aunt Vivian saw that look,” Lady Mildred remarked to herself, “I don’t think she would attempt it.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

There was a small group assembled in the pleasant little sitting-room with its open bay-window facing the sea, and the summer breeze was coming softly in, rustling the trailing wreaths of white jessamine dropping from tall vases of white and crimson roses, and floating the clouds of white muslin drapery and their pink silk linings and ribbons, looking so fresh and festive, as they had been newly hung this morning, when the white vases of crimson roses, the exquisite clusters of pink and white azaleas, the lilies of the valley, and gorgeous crimson, mauve, and silver pelargoniums had been added to the adornments of this and the adjoining bed-chamber, and, resting on brackets, peeping out from between

statuettes, reflecting in mirrors, glowing against the white background of satin paper, with its gold and maple mouldings, had transformed the rooms, with their gay wealth of beauty, their drooping silken petals, their velvety green leaves, and their heaven-dyed, tints into pleasant summer bowers.

"It looks fit for a bridal!" Lady Mildred said, with genuine womanly satisfaction in her work.

Jeanneton, the French nurse, whom she addressed, clasped her hands in a Frenchwoman's raptures.

"*Ciel!*" she cried—"it looks as if *miladi* were a spirit, who had worked one grand charm over this old chateau—before so *triste*."

"What are all the flowers for? Mamma, what are all the flowers for?" his small lordship, Eustace Mountrevor, demanded, in intense curiosity.

He had been allowed for these last few days to stay at Tregarthen with his mother, after certain strict warnings as to his behaviour; and the unaccustomed influence of her constant presence, as well as that of the mysterious sick lady, who spoke to him so gently, and kissed him so softly, and showed him pretty pictures when he was allowed to go into her room, had altogether had a most tranquillising effect on the young gentleman's turbulent spirit.

He had taken to his "uncle Stephen," as he called him, with wonderful affection also; but the fear of being deprived of a romp or a walk with him, and being consigned to Jeanneton and the terrible black-and-white crucifix, of which he was so much afraid, and the orderly, silent household at Roseworthy, where he was so constantly shut up in his mother's suite of rooms, would have been sufficient in itself to make him more careful in the matter of temper and obedience.

Poor child, like many another human nature grown hateful, distorted, dangerous to itself and those who come in contact with it, his needed but the removal of the warping process, the gentle touch of a guiding hand, the sweet air of freedom, a gleam of the sunshine of love, to make it spring up fair and flourishing and sound to the core, ready to blossom hereafter, and bring forth good fruit, instead of apples of Sodom, grown from the soil of an embittered spirit and an empoisoned heart.

"Hush!" his mother said. "You must go away now, Eustace."

"Are you going to have a party?" he inquired, wistfully.

"Mightn't I stay for the party, mamma—stay with uncle Stephen?"

"Uncle Stephen doesn't want you at the party," Lady Mildred said, a suppressed smile breaking over her face; "he wouldn't have you here on any account. Go away—go away now, my dear," she added, more gently; "there are gentlemen coming upstairs. By-and-by uncle Stephen will let you in, perhaps."

"There's nobody coming but uncle Stephen, and the doctor, and a gentleman like a minister," the precocious youngster persisted.

"Oh, yes, there is," said Lady Mildred, with a slight laugh—"there is a new aunt coming."

"A new aunt, mamma! Isn't my grand-aunt coming? Is it my old aunt—your aunt, ma, aunt Viv'an? Is it aunt Viv'an, mamma?"

"No," said his mother—"it is aunt Tredennick."

It was poor, long-suffering, loving Jeanneton who had to suffer from the ebullition of his young lordship's angry grief at being excluded from the party and his "uncle Stephen's" society, "who would have let him in if he had seen him—he knew uncle Stephen would," he cried, howling as loudly as he dared, in his disappointment.

"Hush, hush, *mon cheri!*" Jeanneton soothed. "It is not a party—it is a *fete*, see you, my little one—a *fete—une fete de tristesse, vraiment!* There are none of the guests, or the music, or the beautiful roses."

"There are," said Lord Eustace, doggedly. "Mamma had on her blue silk, and the beautiful white thing that she wore at a party one time."

Half an hour afterwards his lordship Eustace Mountrevor was more thoroughly convinced than ever—if that were possible—of the correctness of his own information and the absurdity of Jeanneton's misrepresentation, when, on cautiously and cleverly eluding her vigilance, he rushed upstairs, and, softly opening the door of that pretty sitting-room on the first floor, with its rose-coloured hangings, crept quietly in.

His mother, Lady Mildred, was wearing her beautiful party-dress of blue silk, with its cloudy over-drapery of white net and Limerick lace, with a bouquet of flowers in her corsage and white gloves. "Uncle Stephen" was in an elegant morning costume, Doctor Lake wore white gloves, so did another bald-headed gentleman with gilded anchor buttons

and gold braid on his coat, and the minister-looking gentleman had on the very same long, white gown he wore in church. Even the sick lady was raised up on her pillows, and, wearing a large, soft jacket of pale rose satin and cashmere, with a spray of white flowers in a gold clasp, and with her pretty hair, cut so short, in bright little rings and curls, and a few long, silky, brown ringlets straying on her shoulders, looked almost well, her eyes were so bright and dark, and her white face had such beautiful rosy cheeks, and she was smiling. Indeed, they were all smiling, and the room was all decorated with flowers, and there were heaps of splendid peaches and nectarines on a silver salver, and macaroons and jelly, and a champagne bottle and glasses. Of course it was a party—they were having a party with the sick lady; but where was the new aunt he had heard was coming?

“Oh, you terrible child, what brings you here?” his mother said; but she laughed, and, thus encouraged, little Eustace crept farther, getting near kind “uncle Stephen,” who never found fault with him, or sent him away. “Come, Eustace,” Lady Mildred interposed—“come with me, dear; you cannot stay here.”

“Oh, let me stay, uncle Stephen—let me stay!” Eustace entreated, getting behind “uncle Stephen’s” chair, and crushing himself close into the muslin curtains of the bed with surprising adroitness. “I stay with you—with you and Miss Tarelyon,” he added, as a happily-persuasive afterthought; “Miss Tarelyon will show me pictures—won’t you, Miss Tarelyon?”

“That’s not Miss Caerlyon, you little goose!” his mother interposed, catching firm hold of his arm. “Come, Eustace, like a good boy, and you shall sit at luncheon with me.”

“Oh, let me stay!” Eustace whimpered, piteously, afraid to make any louder demonstration of displeasure because of his mother. “I’ll stay with uncle Stephen and Miss Tarelyon!”

“This is not Miss Caerlyon, my boy,” said “uncle Stephen,” gently, taking one of the sick lady’s little white thin hands, on which glittered a bright thick gold ring—“she is not Miss Caerlyon any more—she is your uncle Stephen’s wife. Kiss her, my little fellow; she is your aunt now.”

“That is your new aunt who I told you was coming, Eustace,” said his mother, smiling, as she drew the bewildered

child away—"that is your aunt—Winnie Tredennick, my dear."

And then they all went away out of the beautiful, luxurious, invalid-chamber—the father, the physician, the minister, Lady Mildred and her child, the assistants and witnesses of that strange sad bridal—and left Stephen Tredennick and his wife alone together.

Alone together they spent their lives—the brave tender-hearted sailor and the frail gentle little woman who had loved him so faithfully and well. It was a life so strange, so pathetic in its sadness and tenderness, in the burden of deep affliction laid on the husband and his beloved suffering wife, and borne so cheerfully, so patiently, by both in their deep mutual love, as to move to pity and admiring friendship all who ever knew the brave Captain of the *Chittoor* and his heroine-love, who had laid down her youth and life for him. Even Henry, Lord Mountrevor, condoning with some difficulty the *mesalliance* of his wife's cousin, and privately informing his intimate acquaintances at the club and elsewhere that he should not wonder at anything Tredennick or Tregarthen did—"he was always a deuced eccentric fellow"—actually honoured Tregarthen House with a visit of some ten days in the autumn, and, meeting Lieutenant Caerlyon there at dinner, with pretty, vain Sarah, his second daughter, radiant in white tarletane and peach ribbons, changed his mind totally, declared Caerlyon to be a decent fellow, and quite gentlemanly, and Tredennick's wife's relations nice people enough; while, as for the frail, little white-faced woman, lying on the sofa upstairs, he said, with a shiver, that she was uncommonly like a little wax figure, that would break if one attempted to handle it, but a mild, sweet-faced little creature, and that it was a terrible pity for Tredennick—the poor fellow seemed so fond of his little dying wife.

His wife, Lady Mildred, and his son were with him, and that ten days' visit to the home so sanctified by patient suffering and enduring devoted love taught the worldly-hardened husband and the cold wife a lesson. He grew more softened and sincere with the dawning-glimmer of a belief in the possibility of wedded love and womanly truth and constancy; and she, graver, gentler and more patient. Her husband's sincere respect and liking for Stephen, his pity and admiration of Winnie Tredennick, gave them a common ground of friendly feeling and converse; and their child, who, as her cousin had urged, should be a bond of union between the

father and mother, had ceased at least to be the unhappy cause of discord.

Poor little Eustace was rather afraid of both his parents, but, whilst he was rather fond of his capriciously indulgent father, he had a child's intense reverential admiration of his beautiful mother. He feared her most, but he would have loved her best had he been permitted.

Madam Vivian, from the hour in which she had learned that her worst apprehensions with regard to her nephew's intentions towards the woman who had saved his life—the very worst, in Madam's estimation—were to be speedily realised, and that her former little pet, *protegee*, companion, and amanuensis, her poor little tyrannised-over favourite, whom she used to scold for wearing shabby dresses, and exhort against any attempts at fashion or extravagance in the same breath almost, was to be exalted to a position which she would have awarded to the fairest, wealthiest, best-born of the land—her nephew's wife, the mistress of the old home of the Tredennicks of Tregarthen—from that hour Madam Vivian made no sign or overture of forgiveness, reconciliation, or friendship. In fact, those of her own household and her more intimate friends were well aware that, if they would avoid the evoking of her haughty displeasure, they must mention not even the names of Caerlyon or Tredennick in her hearing.

"They are all one now," she said once in cold scorn; "and I do not care to hear of the Caerlyons of Tregarthen. It is a new thing on the earth, and suits neither my ideas nor my inclinations."

Eventually she quitted Roseworthy for an indefinite time, allowing friends of her own to become its tenants—a pleasant, jovial, retired Army major and his wife and daughters, who, for their part, caring very little about the story of Stephen Tredennick's *mesalliance*, and having a good deal of kindly curiosity on the subject, were speedily on terms of intimacy with the master of Tregarthen and its gentle little mistress.

CHAPTER XXXIII., AND LAST.

One year—two years—three years had passed away since the morning of Stephen's and Winifred's bridal. The Major and his wife and daughters had resigned their tenancy of Roseworthy, having inherited a house and landed property of their own in the Midland Counties, and the old mansion, with its old servants, remained unoccupied during the summer months, the domestics not knowing if they must prepare to receive strange tenants again, or their own old rightful mistress, when unexpectedly, to their great joy, they had notice of her arrival from her Continental home, which notice Madam Vivian followed six hours afterwards in person, accompanied still by Miss Trewhella. Indeed that worthy person's discontent at foreign ways and foreign languages, and, worst of all, the perfidy of a foreign gentleman with whom she had formed a sentimental friendship, had been a strong motive in causing her mistress's return.

"Trewhella and I are getting old," Madam said, maliciously indifferent to the sensitive abigail's *amour propre* on the subject of her years and appearance; "her hair is gray and mine is white; we both prefer English cosy comfort, instead of cold Frenchified elegance, amidst which to end our days."

"Reely, Madam, reely," Miss Trewhella said, trembling with indignation, "I trust—I reely trust, Madam—that 'evin will see fit not to cut me off in the prime of life!"

"I trust so, too," returned her mistress, with provoking urbanity; "you will doubtless outlive me by a good many years—for you are twenty years younger than I am—but you are growing an old woman for all that, Trewhella."

Perhaps she was, and perhaps it was the longing desire for English feather-beds, and English coal-fires, and fragrant black tea, and spicy gossip with old English acquaintances that had led her to regard in such bitter disfavour Continental abodes and fare and friends alike. Certain it is that Miss Trewhella from time to time kept her mistress well posted as to the melancholy state of her mind and nerves and health, proceeding as far as incipient symptoms of consump-

tion, with a threatening of melancholy madness, and a strong suspicion of disease of the heart—which signs and symptoms all gradually but surely-increased and assumed aggravated forms until the day of her starting on the return journey to England.

“She is getting old, and her health is breaking, poor thing,” said Madam to herself, with real compassion; “we both want rest and peace in a quiet old English home.”

But there was another desire at the bottom of her heart—a desire, a wish, a lonely longing—which Madam Vivian would not even acknowledge to herself as one of the disposing causes of her return from the villa in the Lower Pyrenees to the old Cornish mansion at Roseworthy. She would not even allow it to herself now, on the day of her return, when she sat in the old handsome green drawing-room, looking about on the familiar furniture and drapery and ornaments, so carefully preserved by her faithful old servants, and looking out, with eyes that grew so dim with the ready emotion of age, on the distant Head of Tregarthen and the memories it conjured up.

Trewhella, hastening in and out of the room on the business of consulting and unpacking and arranging, and in the highest spirits, with marvellously few traces of consumption, melancholia, and heart-disease remaining, overflowed with pieces of information and scraps of news, which she kept imparting to her mistress whether she heeded or not.

“And, Madam,” she began, as she busily arranged a book-tray and reading-desk which she had just unwrapped from paper, “they do say—cook, at least, as knows her so long—that Mrs. Stephen Tredennick has grown nearly well, and she ——” but instantly she was stopped by the quick turn of her mistress’s head and her haughty warning glance.

“I declare, Mrs. Grose,” the waiting-woman said, afterwards, in confidential discourse, “Madam haven’t altered her mind a bit!”

She had not altered her mind, Madam told herself, with cold sternness; she had not altered her mind respecting the impropriety, the absurdity, the utter madness and sacrifice of the unhappy marriage which poor, foolish, soft-hearted, generous Stephen had made, or the selfishness and ambition which had prompted Winnie Caerlyon to accept him. Well, she pitied him—her poor boy Stephen. It was a generous, noble thing of him to do—quixotic, absurd in the extreme, of course, but generous, self-sacrificing, brave. Poor Stephen!

To condemn himself—for long years, perhaps—to be the owner and guardian of a poor, little crippled creature! Poor Winnie!

In spite of her worldly heart, many a time during those three years her better nature had uttered, with softened, pitying feeling, "Poor Stephen! poor Winnie!"

She had not altered her mind now, she strenuously declared; only—well, she must see her poor nephew and be reconciled to him before she died—reconciled to Winnie also; what was done could not be undone—she would be reconciled to Stephen and to Stephen's poor, little, afflicted wife. Death-bed reconciliations were but cowardly things, like death-bed charities after a selfish life, Madam Vivian wisely said; she would be reconciled now, ere she lay down to die.

She would be reconciled. And on this very day of her return, in the soft, warm, shadowy summer afternoon, Madam Vivian, strong of will and purpose yet, for all her seventy years, put on her travelling attire, which she had scarcely laid off, took her slender, silver-headed walking stick in her hand, and then quietly set out to walk to her nephew's house at Tregarthen.

Poor Stephen's sorrowful, desolate home—her poor, generous, self-sacrificed boy! What did Trewhella mean by her ridiculous gossiping news about his wife's being nearly well? Those kind of people were so apt to exaggerate everything. The poor, dying, crippled creature was perhaps able to go about in a Bath-chair, or be carried into an easy-cushioned barouche, or something of that kind.

"Poor Winnie! She used to be such an active, nimble little creature. Poor Stephen, to what a life he has doomed himself!" Madam thought again, as she came in sight of the quiet old gray-stone-pointed house lying amongst the trees and evergreen shrubberies of Tregarthen, with the blue smoke rising softly on the quiet evening air, not even a ray of sunlight to brighten up the rows of windows, not a sound to be heard on the smoothly-mown lawn or the neatly-raked carriage drive, not a figure of a human being visible about the orderly precincts of the calm, quiet decorous-looking old mansion.

"It must be nothing less than a prison to him after his free, wandering life—my poor Stephen!" Madam almost groaned. "His days have to be spent in an invalid's room, or in one of those silent downstairs rooms, reading the newspaper."

One of the silent downstairs rooms had its long French windows standing open. It did not look particularly gloomy or dreary either, with its vases of flowers, its gay litter of tiny chairs and footstools and tables, its open books, writing-cases, and open piano, with loose sheets of music fluttering here and there in the evening breeze, all which Madam caught sight of as she passed on.

She had espied the open door of the high walled fruit-garden lying to the south of the house, and bent her steps thither.

"He is in the garden, perhaps," she thought, with kindly pity. "He was always fond of wandering about in a garden, plucking flowers and fruit, poor fellow!"

Yes, there was no doubt that he was in the garden, for Madam caught the sound of advancing steps and her nephew's voice—not a very subdued or sorrowful-toned voice either—indeed, he was laughing gaily with some one.

"You're a nice young lady!" she heard Captain Stephen say, hilariously. "Do you pretend to have a conscience? I should be glad to know. How many more ripe gooseberries am I to gather for you, scratching my poor hands? They are so exquisitely white it is a pity certainly. No, you sha'n't! No, you sha'n't! I have no intention of spoiling you as your mother is doing, mademoiselle."

"Visitors!" Madam thought, in vexed disappointment. "What shall I do? It was silly of me to come here unexpectedly; but I never imagined that he would have visitors."

• But a retreat being impossible, Madam stood her ground quietly, gazing in surprise and confused uncertainty at the group that emerged from the rose-covered archway of the garden-door, with the long vista beyond of strawberry beds, gooseberry bushes bending beneath their weight of purplish-red, translucent green, and downy amber fruit, wall-fruit ripening in the sheltered summer air, open cucumber frames, trailing vines, and the distant green-house, with its roof festooned by drooping stems clustered with white grapes.

Was that Stephen—her nephew, Stephen! That great, broad-chested, ruddy-cheeked, jolly-looking country gentleman in a straw hat and gray morning-coat, with a dainty little bouquet of moss-rosebuds in the top buttonhole? And carrying a baby?

Nothing less. A great, fat, handsome, lively baby of some eight or nine months old, who held an enormous amber

gooseberry squeezed in one little pink, fat, dimpled hand, and with the other retained a firm and unceremonious clutch of Captain Tredennick's necktie!

And by his side, leaning on his other arm, walked a lady—a pale, fair delicate looking little woman, dressed in a simple graceful dress of pearly gray, with rich claret velvet ribbons in her hair and around her throat; these with a thick silk sash of the same hue knotted at her waist and hanging its heavy rich fringes down far over her dress, brought out the delicacy of its clear pale hue and the fragile purity of her own complexion in a manner that caught Madam Vivian's artistic eye and charmed it on the instant.

That pale little woman walking rather feebly by his side, the fat, handsome, troublesome baby, and the jolly-looking country gentleman—who were they? Utter blank amazement rooted Madam Vivian to the ground.

"Aunt Vivian! My dear aunt—my dear aunt!" Stephen Tredennick cried, rushing forward, holding the baby tightly yet, even while he embraced and kissed the old lady; whereby the young person in the white embroidered frock was brought into remarkable contiguity to Madam Vivian's bonnet.

"Aunt, dear," he said in the next breath, holding aunt and baby squeezed in one arm, and allowing Madam not an instant's opportunity for the tender, severely-reproachful, gracious, forgiving little speech she had been preparing all the way from Roseworthy—never even seeming to recollect the necessity for it in his flush of pleasure and gratification—"Aunt, dear—look here!" and he put his other arm around the little woman in the pearly-gray poplin dress. "Aunt, look at my Winnie! As well as ever nearly, thank Heaven! She can walk about the grounds as well as I can now! Isn't it wonderful?"

Winnie Tredennick remembered the need for the forgiving speech if her husband did not. The old shy colour flooded her face, and her lips trembled as Madam remembered to have seen years ago when giving her one of her lengthy rebukes.

"Dear Madam," she faltered, timidly putting out her hand, "I am glad—so glad to see you again."

"And I," said Madam, gracefully meeting the greeting hand more than half way, "am glad to see that you, my dear, have been so mercifully restored."

Madam meant that Winnie should have the benefit of that neat little reproachfully-kind speech, and was proceeding to say that "the pleasure of knowing that you have recovered your health, Mrs. Tredennick, is gratifying enough to cause me to feel less keenly the memory of the past," when, fortunately, or unfortunately, the floating white ostrich feather, curling gracefully on the top of Madam Vivian's black-lace bonnet, caught the quick, bright violet-gray eyes of the young person in the embroidered frock, and in an instant both the satiny dimpled hands, dropping the crushed ripe gooseberry, clutched at the white feather in rampant glee.

The baby screaming with delight, there was an end put from that time, henceforth, and for ever, to Madam's studied sentences and the grave, rebuking, reconciliatory speech.

"Oh dear me—the child!" Madam exclaimed, involuntarily.

"My daughter, aunt," said Stephen Tredennick, putting the fat, handsome, troublesome baby right into the old lady's arms. "Isn't she a beauty—a regular young Tredennick? Hasn't she got the Tredennick eyes, aunt, and the Tredennick nose? She's an imperious young dame! And my word! hasn't she got the Tredennick temper? She has got Winnie's mouth, though," he added, more softly—"a gentle, persuasive little mouth—and Winnie's hair! See what thick, curly brown hair she has, and she is not nine months old!"

"Only eight months and three weeks, dear," put in the mother's "gentle, persuasive little mouth," with accurate maternal knowledge. "Dear Madam, isn't she very like Stephen?"

"Very," said Madam, holding the troublesome baby in a closer clasp.

A kind of thrill ran through her—a momentary feeling of displeasure and resistance at the sound of the wifely familiar words which seemed to draw Stephen and Stephen's child so tenderly close to her who had been Winnie Caerlyon as to shut out her who was but Madam Vivian, his aunt, into the outer circle of mere relationship.

It was but momentary. In the tender light of Winnie Tredennick's wistful loving eyes, in the radiance of Stephen Tredennick's wedded happiness, in the touch of the baby-arms of the little one on her bosom, who seemed like a son's child, a grandchild to the lonely old white-haired woman, the last remnant of coldness, jealousy, and unworthy pride faded quietly out of her heart.

"We called her after you, Madam," Winnie added, softly.

The old lady looked earnestly and inquisitively at her for a moment, and then she gave her the reconciled kiss she had meant to delay for so much longer.

"Did you, my dear?" she said, putting the baby into her arms. "There, Helen Tredennick, you shall make peace between your mother and your grand-aunt forever!"

THE END.



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